

PERDÓNAME, MADRE, ¿HE PECADO? AN INVESTIGATION OF HISPANIC
CATHOLICS IN THE UNITED STATES AND THEIR ATTITUDES
TOWARD WOMEN BEING ALLOWED TO ENTER
THE PRIESTHOOD

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Hispanic American Catholics are a growing immigrant population in the United States, with Hispanic cultures and Catholicism woven together in unique ways. This situation presents a window through which can be examined the dynamic between individualism and religiosity. Four logistic regression models were estimated utilizing data from the Pew Research Center 2013 Survey of U.S. Latinos, in order to investigate the correlates of Hispanic American Catholic support for women in the Catholic priesthood. Religious individualism (self-determination) was measured in two dimensions, while cultural individualism (acculturation) was measured in one dimension. The first three regression models test three hypotheses related to religious and cultural individualism, while the fourth model factors in all of the variables used. Findings generally supported the saliency of religious individualism over against the hierarchal dogma of the Catholic Church, but not the saliency of cultural individualism. However, findings also exposed the complexities inherent in both Catholic religiosity and acculturation among Hispanic American Catholics.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | Page |
|--|------|
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | iii |
| CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW | 3 |
| Religion and Individualism in the United States | 3 |
| Women in Christendom | 9 |
| American Christianity and Women in Ministry..... | 11 |
| Women in Catholicism | 13 |
| The Hispanic Catholic Population in the United States..... | 22 |
| Ethnicity, Religion, and Gender Attitudes | 29 |
| Why this Study? | 31 |
| CHAPTER 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES | 36 |
| CHAPTER 4. DATA AND METHODS | 39 |
| Dataset..... | 39 |
| Methodology | 40 |
| CHAPTER 5. RESULTS | 43 |
| CHAPTER 6. DISCUSSION..... | 57 |
| CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION..... | 65 |
| APPENDIX A. SUMMARY FRAMEWORK TABLE | 69 |
| APPENDIX B. DESCRIPTIVE TABLE..... | 72 |
| REFERENCES | 75 |

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Controversies concerning the place of women within ecclesiastical structures are present within many traditions found within the vast diversity of Christendom. While varying degrees of gender norms disallowing women to hold certain positions or engage in certain activities can be found enshrined in some of the more theologically conservative denominations, the centrality of such policies seems to be especially pronounced within certain ecclesiastical settings in the United States, where it stands in stark contrast to the egalitarian progress that has been (and continues to be) evolving in American society. Nevertheless, consistent with the progressivism fueled by individualism that has marked our social evolution, the U.S. has featured a long tradition of feminist movements that have affected virtually every area of society, stretching from the first wave feminism of the Women's Suffrage movement of the 19th century all the way to the #metoo movement of the 21st century.

The feminist thread of activism has also impacted American Christendom to varying degrees, as will be seen below. The controversy over women filling ministry positions has ebbed and flowed in American Christianity since the Puritans of New England, and recently has surfaced again alongside #metoo scandals within evangelical denominations (cf., e.g., Shaw 2019). While women in Catholicism have actively pursued niche ministry roles for centuries, contrary positions urging the inclusion of women in official (i.e., ordained) roles have grown since at least the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1970s.

Although more diverse in composition than previously, the majority of Christian Hispanics continue to affiliate with Roman Catholicism. As of 2014, 77% of Hispanics in the U.S. identified as Christian, with almost 50% identifying as Catholic (Pew Research 2014^b). The

study conducted narrowed its investigation to Hispanic Catholic support and opposition for the idea that the Catholic Church should allow women to enter the priesthood, using this issue as a window into the influential nature of individualism on religion in immigrant communities.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Religion and Individualism in the United States

The role of individualism as a defining feature of the United States over against the various forms of collectivism found throughout world history has long been of interest to social philosophers and scientists. Such interest has been especially pronounced regarding the intersection of American individualism with religion.¹

From an early melding of diverse sources and situations, from the writings of philosophers like John Locke to the Puritans' perception that they were refugees fleeing religious persecution, the principle of individual autonomy became enshrined as an American ideal. While the American Founders seemed most concerned with individual freedom with reference to existing religious traditions, almost immediately the principle curved back around and became a significant shaping influence on the future creation and maintenance of religions within the American context.

It can be argued that the seed of individualism had previously been planted in the rich conceptual soil of the Protestant Reformation (cf. Lehmann and Roth 1995), as epitomized in Martin Luther's rejection of a dogmatic Catholicism for what he termed "the priesthood of all believers" – i.e., every individual Christian was a priest and, therefore, an interpreter of the Bible (Weber 1920/2002). It is this principle that British theologian Alister McGrath (2008) has termed Protestantism's "dangerous idea," specifying "the fundamentally democratic nature of Protestant theology" as "an enterprise that may be undertaken by any person, on the basis of a

¹ It is worth noting that the relationship between religious individualism and the shaping of the wider society is quite direct, if rendered historically complex due to secularization and the process of disenchantment. As examples, we need only consider Weber's "Protestant Ethic" thesis (1920/2002), as well as Gramsci's reappropriation of Luther's "priesthood of all believers" to describe the free thought of the "organic intellectual" (McGrath 2008: 238).

publicly available resource – the Bible” (232). The principle is seen as “dangerous” in the sense that the Protestant Reformation essentially removed the long-standing mediator between God and the individual – the Catholic Church – and, in the post-Reformation analysis of Max Weber (1920/2002), repositioned spiritual responsibility. Virtually overnight, the European landscape began to change and individuals suddenly had a rapidly growing list of new religious options along with the inherent burdensome weight that came with the sudden possession of religious self-determination.

Weber’s (1920/2002) classic “Protestant Ethic” thesis, concerned as it is with the origin of capitalism, connects the dots in positing an “elective affinity” between Protestant Christianity and individualism. Essentially, Protestantism becomes a significant variable in shaping American individualism in the broader sense.² However, as subsequent researchers have noted in various ways, American individualism bends back around and effects the very nature of religion in the American context (cf., e.g. Bellah et al. 2007; Berger 1969; Wuthnow 1990, 1992). This can be observed along many lines: the rapid democratization of religion, the creation of a plethora of new religious movements, the emergence of a competitive “spiritual marketplace,” the transformation of the American population into “religious consumers,” and so forth (cf. Hatch 1991; Marsden 2000; Roof 2001).

As early as the nineteenth century, De Tocqueville was fascinated by the competitive marketplace of religion owing to American democratization and individualism: “When Tocqueville arrived in America, he was initially struck by the apparent hold Christianity had over Americans... He later came to appreciate the hold that Americans had over Christianity”

² For detailed discussion of individualism and western culture, including an expanded analysis of Weber’s disenchantment and rationalization, see Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press 2018, reprint ed.).

(Nadon 2014: 28). When the U.S. was founded, there were perhaps a dozen types of Christianity worldwide – today, approximate estimates are at thirty-three thousand (Barrett et al. 2001: 16). Most of those denominations emerged from the rich soil of American individualism or owe their existence to the cultural diffusion of the principle.

In Weberian terms, Protestantism was significant in the processes that led to rationalization, but now religion itself has been reshaped by those processes. Alternatively, using George Ritzer’s updated terminology, American religion has become as “McDonaldized” as virtually every other American bureaucratic structure (Drane 2012; Ritzer 2014). One aspect of this, at the individual level, is that religious beliefs and practices have gradually become subject to self-determination, with religious faith being primarily concerned with the individual rather than collective conceptions – what Durkheim foresaw as the “cult of the individual” and Robert Bellah would later term “Sheilaism” (Bellah 2007: 219-247; Durkheim 1964: 407).³

Calvillo and Bailey (2015), examining how Latino ethnic identity is impacted by religion, observed that:

Multiethnic, pan-ethnic, or integrated congregations may support a hypothesis that associates strong religious identities with the weakening of ethnic ones. In those religious contexts, ethnicity may be purposefully downplayed and wane as religious identity flourishes somewhat disconnected from ethnic particularism. (74)

The researchers go on to establish that Catholicism tends to preserve traditional ethnicity among Hispanics in contrast to the individualism mediated through Protestantism, even citing research to suggest that Hispanic American Catholicism may prove to be an exception to Hispanic assimilation in the American context (2015: 75). However, this is a surface level observation that can only be held if the religious boundaries of American Catholicism and Protestantism are

³ “Sheila” was an honest respondent who, when asked about her religion, admitted that her religion was really *about herself* (hence, “Sheilaism”).

absolutized. I would suggest that doing this results in the oversimplification of a much more complex dynamic that is at work in the American marketplace of ideas (spiritual and otherwise).

If the dynamic is expanded to the macro level and acknowledge that American ideological boundaries possess more permeability than has heretofore been acknowledged, a similar process may be at work with American individualism in the Protestantized pluralist context of the U.S. exerting enough influence over some Hispanic Catholics that it becomes the stronger identity, weakening not only traditional Hispanic ethnicity but the formerly strong Catholicism as well. There is an irony here, as inculturation figures prominently into contemporary Catholic evangelization techniques (Doyle 2012), where in our dynamic at least some Hispanic Catholics are undergoing inculturation at the hands of a largely secularized principle (individualism), which itself has emerged from a competing religious context (Protestantism), and yet without complete conversion (i.e., while remaining loyal to Catholicism to a high degree).

Again, one can argue that this religious evolution is entirely consistent with the essence of Protestantism, with its multiplicity of denominations and numerous biblical interpretations.⁴

Lester Kurtz (2007) summarizes:

Early Christianity, like Judaism and Islam, had a strong community orientation, and its participants probably perceived of themselves primarily as members of the church. The strong individualism of contemporary Protestantism is a recent historical development, a product first of the rebellion against the official church during the Protestant Reformation, and then in the individualization of Western culture associated with the Enlightenment and the industrial revolution. Ideas long present in Western culture that emphasized the value of individual freedom and independence were elaborated during the social transformation in modern society. Individualism had an affinity with industrialization, because it encouraged people to break free from bonds of kinship and feudalism, and with Protestantism, which constituted a rebellion against feudal Christianity. (131)

⁴ An argument advanced, in varying ways, by Bellah (2002), Berger (1969), Hatch (1991), Marsden (2000), McGrath (2008), Niebuhr (1929/1957), and Weber (1920/2002).

Roman Catholicism, on the other hand, was the opponent in the Reformation, the supposed foil to individualism: a religious hierarchy that functioned via infallible dogma and eschewed individualism as heretical (cf. Pope Pius X 1907).⁵ Officially, this has not changed. Yet, in the context of American individualism, many American Catholics have, for all practical purposes, become “Protestantized” in that they tend to practice the same sort of religious self-determination as their Protestant counterparts, as inconsistent as that might be given the authority structure of Catholicism (Carlin 2013; D’Antonio 2011; Kennedy 1988; Roof and McKinney 1987: 52-56). Nevertheless, as similar as their embrace of religious individualism may be to their Protestant counterparts, there is an important difference: American Catholics are stubbornly loyal to Catholicism in general even when questioning specific Catholic teachings, with religious switching being much more prominent among Protestants. In a sense, although it sounds paradoxical, American Protestantism “converts” some Hispanic Catholics without ever actually converting them – i.e., they remain “Catholic” while imbibing an individualist attitude of religious self-determination, even on issues of dogmatic stature.

The result, then, according to a study conducted by Dillon (1998), is a situation in which dissenting Catholics maintain a generalized connection to a Catholic community of memory while simultaneously utilizing the variability found in Catholic history to selectively question particular positions, including the ban on women’s ordination. In a later study on American Catholics, Dillon (2001) summarizes:

... interpretive autonomy allows [American Catholics] to recast the official discourse of the church hierarchy in ways that advance alternative interpretations. Interpretive autonomy is grounded in the Catholic tradition or habitus and is reflexively used by

⁵ The exclusivity of Catholicism as collective and communal in nature, over against pre-Protestant and Protestant tendencies toward individualism, has been most consistently expressed throughout Catholic history in the papal declaration of *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, “outside the Church there is no salvation” – cf. the summary of papal adherence to this principle in “The Popes on Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Solus” (Slaves 2005).

Catholics both to maintain the vibrancy of the church and expand the possibilities for institutional change. (411)

Research on Catholic identities has generally distinguished between “traditional” and “liberal” Catholics using various criteria, with female Catholics often being divided along feminist lines though remaining committed to the Catholic institution (Ecklund 2005). To some degree, Catholic identities fluctuate with the orientation of the parish to which they belong (Konieczny 2009). Starks (2013) identifies a more ambiguous category, “moderate” Catholics, who – unlike “liberal” and “traditional” Catholics – do not self-identify as such and yet mix individualist reinterpretations of certain issues with traditional Catholic fealty. It is this latter category that probably best captures the tension of interest in the study conducted.

Typologies being human constructs, there are perhaps other ways of categorization that may prove useful. Over thirty years ago, Jablonski (1988), in framing the issue of Catholic views on women’s ordination, suggested two categories among those Catholics supporting women’s ordination. The “selectively orthodox stance” includes those who are loyal Catholics hoping to bring about change from within the existing Catholic structure, while the “selectively heterodox stance” describes those who blame the structure itself and eschew the institution though refusing to leave the Church (164). Identifying each group based on the rhetoric employed and terminology used post-Vatican II, Jablonski’s first category best fits the paradoxical case of Hispanic American Catholics maintaining a firm grasp on Catholicism while also daring to lobby for female priests.

The study conducted focused on how individualism fares in tension with Catholic dogma – specifically, the immutable (as defined by the Catholic Church) restriction of the priesthood to males. The probable place of rationalized individualism in creating this kind of tension is not unique to the study conducted. Motivated by the 1998 excommunication of Ann Nugent, an

Australian Catholic activist and organizer of Ordination of Catholic Women, McPhillips (1999)

observes the same connections:

... modernity calls into question the need for authority based on tradition and the largely patriarchal basis on which religious traditions have flourished. Informed by rationalities that posit both the importance of emancipation and ethics of individualism, it is inevitable that discourses promoting gender equality will conflict with Christian traditionalism and produce intractable power struggles, such as has been witnessed with regard to the ordination of women. (293)

The kind of dichotomy identified by Scarborough et al. (2019) – varying levels in the evolution of egalitarian perspectives, with traditional patriarchal viewpoints continuing to be influential in the private sphere – is evident with Hispanic American Catholics and the question of women’s ordination. In fact, there is some evidence among Millennials (ages 18-31) that Hispanic American Catholic women are the most likely to hold conservative views on gender-related issues (D’Antonio, Dillon, and Gautier 2013). Yet, there is also ample evidence that the progressive egalitarianism of the U.S. sociopolitical context is trickling down into the religious context, even the hierarchal ecclesiastical context of the Roman Catholic Church. As noted by Badillo (2006):

New identities materialize as individuals differentiate themselves from their communities of origin. A struggle between individualism and communalism has persisted in the transition to the new immigrant church, where Latinos may function with or without native clergy.... The identities of Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans have been regenerated through a wide range of factors, depending on the time of arrival, contacts with the homeland, and intervention of local institutions. The continuities and discontinuities of Latino religious tradition, which historians and social scientists have not previously examined within a comparative urban framework, along with more studied phenomena such as postmodern cities and identities, constitute the pillars of Latino Catholicism in the new immigrant church. (210)

Women in Christendom

Broadly considered, the place of women within Christianity has been fairly consistent throughout Christian history, with female members being generally subservient within

traditional patriarchal structures.⁶

The rationale for ecclesiastical patriarchy has rested on biblical interpretations that emerged within a patriarchal social context. It was observed, for instance, that women had no place in the priestly functions within ancient Judaism as expressed in the Tanakh.⁷ Likewise, early Christian leadership was nearly unanimous in the observation that Jesus appointed no female apostles⁸, and qualifications for bishops/pastors were consistently restricted to males. In particular, many strands of Christian tradition enshrined two passages from the Pauline corpus as universal principles not to be deviated from: 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 (“women should keep silent in the church”), and 1 Timothy 2:12 (“I do not allow a woman to teach nor to exercise authority over a man”). Such New Testament passages fueled historic objections to women’s ordination on considerations of both the nature of the priesthood itself and gender essentialist notions concerning the inherent disposition of women as unsuited for the office. This perspective is found throughout Patristic⁹ sources and is carried over with virtually no contrary consideration into both Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy, the two majority Christian communions evolving out of an early unified Christendom (cf. Clark 1983).¹⁰ Contemporary research has

⁶ Please note the words “fairly consistent” – i.e., mainstream Christendom has promoted patriarchal biblical interpretations and traditions for the most part. To be fair, however, there have always been minority strands within Church history that have pursued more egalitarian positions – cf., e.g. Elisabeth Gössmann (1996), “Women’s Ordination and the Vatican,” *Feminist Theology* 6(18): 67-86.

⁷ The *Tanakh* is the Hebrew term for the broader Hebrew canon, including not only the Torah, but the Wisdom Literature, the historical books, and the Prophets – what Christians have retitled “the Old Testament.”

⁸ This interpretation, like many others, is questionable given the mention of “Junia” (a Greek female name) as an apostle in Romans 16.7 – see Eldon Jay Epp, *Junia: The First Woman Apostle*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005.

⁹ *Patristic* sources refer to the writings of the “Church Fathers,” the earliest post-New Testament church leaders. This corpus is generally considered to contain the writings of Clement of Rome (2nd cent. CE) to those of Jerome and St. Augustine (4th cent. CE). While Protestant traditions vary in their reception of these writings, both Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy hold them in an authoritative interpretive position.

¹⁰ The general patriarchal structure of the early Christian traditions does not mean, as third wave feminist studies have emphasized, that women did not manage to carve out significant roles for themselves. Rather, it simply means that women in general were not allowed into the realm of officially ordained leadership roles.

shown that such theological views continue to influence both Catholic and non-Catholic opposition to women's ordination (Smith and Stevens 2003).

Somewhat surprisingly, given the widespread acceptance of Luther's principle of the priesthood of all believers¹¹, the early Protestant traditions continued to hold the position that only males could hold officially ordained positions of church leadership. However, it was not long before Protestantism's "dangerous idea" (McGrath 2008) – the substitution of individual biblical interpretation for the unified declarations of the Catholic hierarchy – began to bring about reevaluations of the gender question in Christian churches. By the time Enlightenment rationalism and the American democratization of religion were added into the mix, bona fide fractures began to appear within Christian groups regarding the position of women in the churches.

American Christianity and Women in Ministry

Even before the United States was founded, the seeds of a spiritual marketplace featuring a plurality of competing biblical interpretations began to emerge among the Puritans of New England. The diversity of Christian ideas with reference to gender became evident as early as the 1600s: the advent of the Quakers (who allowed female ministers), the exiled Puritan prophetess Anne Hutchinson, and Roger Williams' founding of Rhode Island as a haven for those who held alternate Christian interpretations (Eck 2002; Marsden 2000).

By the nineteenth century, the inclusion of women in ministry had become a full-blown controversy within the Holiness Movement that birthed a plethora of smaller Protestant denominations (e.g. the Church of God, the Church of the Nazarene, Free Methodists) that

¹¹ Luther's principle of *the priesthood of all believers* is the (at the time) radical idea that, in stark contrast to the Catholicism of the Middle Ages, *every* vocation held by a Christian – from baker to bartender – was holy and sacred. In other words, *all* Christians (not just priests, cardinals, and popes) were gifted and called by God.

allowed the full inclusion of women in leadership positions – it was out of this movement that such historic events as Women’s suffrage and prohibition emerged (Zink-Sawyer 2003).

Women like Jessie Penn Lewis, a Welsh evangelist, toured the country promoting the full inclusion of women in Christian leadership positions (Gerrard 2014). This perspective continued to gain ground until it was stalled with the advent of Pentecostalism. Emerging out of the Holiness Movement, Pentecostalism is considered to have begun around 1904. Originally sharing a commitment to the inclusion of women in leadership positions, this movement eventually resulted in the Assemblies of God, which officially adopted the traditional Christian position of male-only ordination. Meanwhile, Baptists – and especially the Southern Baptist Convention – also continued to hold the traditional position.¹²

After the Women’s Liberation Movement of the 1970s, some Protestant evangelicals once again resurrected the issue of women in ministry, resulting in what is commonly known as the “egalitarian” movement among evangelical theologians, others of whom grouped together under the opposing viewpoint as “complementarians” (cf. Clouse and Clouse 1989). This debate has continued in evangelical theological circles to the present day, resulting in some changes toward the inclusion of women in varied denominations. Most recently, the #metoo movement has reached American churches, resulting in several high-profile sexual harassment scandals in various denominations, including the Southern Baptist Convention. It is within this context that the place of women in the church, including the inclusion of women in ministry, is being hotly debated (cf. Shaw 2019).

The topic of women in Christian leadership is once again a timely issue, and can be

¹² The Assemblies of God and the Southern Baptist Convention today represent the two largest Protestant denominations in the United States.

conceptualized as both an aspect of the broader evolution of gender equality in the United States and as nevertheless taking place alongside factors absent from that broader context (e.g., the questions of religious authority and theological conceptions). Given that individualism has significantly impacted the nature of American religion, even more hierarchal Christian communions find themselves affected by the evolution of the gender controversy. Nowhere has this been more apparent than among the membership of the Roman Catholic Church, representing perhaps the most rigid hierarchal structure in all of Christendom.

Women in Catholicism

Roman Catholicism is not immune to the ways in which the western evolution of feminist thought has been manifested in ecclesiastical contexts. Similar to several other Christian traditions, women have carved out niches within the Catholic Church – some official and some unofficial – where they are able to function in ministerial capacities (Hunt 2013). Motivated by the egalitarianism emerging in Swedish Lutheran and American Episcopal circles in the 1950s, Mary Lynch spearheaded the concept of “Women-Church,” which reached organizational status in the mid-1970s in the United States with the Women’s Ordination Conference (WOC) (Hunt 2009: 86-87). This represented a feminist movement within the Catholic Church (and, eventually, spilled over into other denominations as well) that, for the first time, promoted the priesthood as a “right” for women who were so called and gifted (Hunt 2009: 86). Throughout the 1980s, Catholic feminists continued to hold independently-funded conferences and establish organizational bases to promote change from within Catholicism, efforts which have continued into the present with a number of organizations and high-profile feminist theologians (Hunt 2009: 91-93).

The way for such women’s movements within Catholicism had been prepared by

historical changes within Roman Catholicism. The Second Vatican Council (1962-1966) emphasized Christian unity and moved the Catholic Church into the modern age in significant ways, theoretically creating more opportunities for women to serve in the Church (Gebara 2008). Such roles included the social construction of female leadership in a few Catholic parishes here and there, made possible by a shortage of Catholic priests (Wallace 1993). However, while the ability of women in restrictive contexts to carve out niches of authority is significant, there remains an important distinction between official ecclesiastical positions (set apart by the ritual of ordination) and unofficial positions that are tolerated (de Gasquet 2010).

Roman Catholicism has long featured multiple positions for women in ministry, pursuing a unique navigation of gender roles in ecclesiastical settings, creating the interesting situation of having significantly more female ministry involvement than many Protestant denominations but substantially less women's ordination (Adams 2007).¹³ Further, it is worth noting that some research suggests that while the Catholic Church has carefully navigated women's participation, the Catholic hierarchy has simultaneously held feminist activism at a distance, and the Church has been nowhere more successful at this than in Latin America (Gebara 2008). One female Catholic theologian has expressed how this has added insult to injury: "Today, many women theologians teach priests. We evaluate their work, engage them in the complexity of the Catholic intellectual tradition and help form them for ministry. But in our own parishes, we are at times forced to sit silently by and watch deficient homilies, uninspiring liturgies, neglected

¹³ This distinction in Catholicism that results in more women in active ministry and speaking roles is probably due to the way in which Catholicism distinguishes between the sacred and the profane. Holding to a sacramental theology positions the line of demarcation around sacramental activities (e.g., baptism, presiding over the Eucharist) which require ordination. Thus, women may participate in a plethora of roles, even in teaching male candidates for the priesthood in seminary, just so long as they are not ordained or take on a sacramental role. This dynamic is different from what is typically found in Protestant evangelical denominations. Attempts by some Catholic activists to present alternative Catholic histories favoring women in ministry are likely collapsing these categories as defined by official Catholic dogma (cf. e.g., Daigler 2012).

communities and abuses of power” (González-Andrieu 2019: 31).

Representing an ancient stream of Christianity, Roman Catholicism has denied the Catholic priesthood to women since its inception and continues to staunchly define the priesthood in strictly male terms. Although observed nearly thirty years ago, the comment of LaCugna (1992) still holds true today:

The many ministries performed by women are not officially recognized by the Roman Catholic Church in a sacramental way. Women cannot be consecrated bishops nor ordained priests nor ordained deacons because, according to the Vatican, women do not bear a natural resemblance to Jesus Christ. Women cannot (officially) preach the Gospel. Women cannot mediate the grace of the Eucharist. Women’s ministry is considered to be secondary, a supplement to ordained priesthood, which remains the real ministry. (239)

In 1994, in response to feminist Catholic movements, Pope John Paul II clarified the official position:

Although the teaching that priestly ordination is to be reserved to men alone has been preserved by the constant and universal Tradition of the Church and firmly taught by the Magisterium in its more recent documents, at the present time in some places it is nonetheless considered still open to debate, or the Church’s judgment that women are not to be admitted to ordination is considered to have a merely disciplinary force. Wherefore, in order that all doubt may be removed regarding a matter of great importance, a matter which pertains to the Church’s divine constitution itself, in virtue of my ministry of confirming the brethren (cf. Luke 22:32), *I declare that the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgment is to be definitively held by all the Church’s faithful.* (4, emphasis mine)

If these official statements were not clear enough, a 2008 declaration promised excommunication for any woman undergoing ordination, as well as for anyone ordaining a woman, a penalty enforced several times both before and since the declaration (Levada 2008; Washburn 2017). Even in a Christian tradition that features many women in various kinds of ministry, that holds arguably the most elevated view of the Virgin Mary in all of Christendom, and – aside from perhaps the Pope himself – features Mother Teresa as the Church’s most recognizable public face, one of the strictest censures on the ordination of women remains steadfast. What de

Gasquet (2010) termed “the stained-glass ceiling” remains a reality.

Cragun et al. (2016), in a study investigating attitudes towards women’s ordination within the LDS (Mormon) church, noted the importance of considering the ecclesiastical structure of denominations:

Religious groups different polities should inform the methods by which scholars study attitudes towards female ordination. In denominations with a congregational polity, asking members whether they think a deserving woman should have the right to be ordained makes sense. In a hierarchically organised [*sic*] tradition ... however, asking members whether worthy women should be ordained may not reflect the process by which policy or doctrinal change occurs. (125)

Hunt (2009), utilizing a neo-Marxist approach to theology as dominant ideology, likewise highlights the hierarchal nature of the Catholic Church as a principal factor in maintaining a patriarchal stance:

Many Catholic feminists had completed theological degrees, both professional and academic, and were prepared with all the requirements for ordination minus the anatomy. It remains intellectually and spiritually shocking in a postmodern age to realize how a biologicistic reading of texts still keeps women from ordination. Theologians find it hard to explain in a symbolic universe how a one-dimensional analysis — biological maleness as constituent of qualification for ordination — could have any credibility. *This inadequate explanation "works" only insofar as kyriarchal¹⁴ power can absolutize it.* (87, emphasis mine)

Again stressing the importance of ecclesiastical structure, Kim and Matiko (2019) use discourse analysis in examining some of the official Catholic declarations on women’s ordination, highlighting the importance of language as a manipulative tool that – conscious or not – reinforces the patriarchal assumptions embedded and enforced within the Catholic hierarchy.

Unlike Protestant denominations dealing with similar issues, the Roman Catholic Church features a hierarchal authority structure founded on a dogma of papal and ecclesial infallibility.

¹⁴ The term “kyriarchal” was coined by Catholic feminist theologian Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, and combines the terms *kyrios* (the English transliteration of the Greek term for “lord”) and *patriarchy*.

In fact, defining the priesthood in strictly male terms is Catholic Tradition, a specific category within Catholic theology. While some Catholic traditions (note the lower-case “t” here) are historical conventions that could (theoretically) change (e.g., requiring celibacy for the priesthood), other aspects of Catholic Tradition (note the upper-case “T” here) are considered immutable by infallible papal declaration. Strictly limiting the ordained priesthood to males has been consistently placed in the latter category (Hunt 2009; Paul 1994).

Murphy (2014) utilizes Weberian concepts of authority to examine how Roman Catholicism functions as a complex formal organization that maintains and reinforces a gendered environment in many ways, not least of which is its ban on women’s ordination. Committed Catholic novelist Rosalie Morales Kearns explores this topic in her novel, *Kingdom of Women*. Lauded for its critique of male patriarchy, Kearns’ fictional story deals with a future Catholic Church in which women have become priests, only to be massacred by the patriarchy, the massacre then becoming a pretense for a feminist vengeance in which women destroy the male priesthood (2017).

Despite a gendered hierarchal structure, and just like those Protestant denominations dealing with similar issues, the Roman Catholic Church features many members who hold contrary stances on the gender issue. Ebaugh (1991) suggested that such individualistic opinions have been enabled only through the substantial (though, no doubt, unintentional) weakening of Catholic institutional authority that occurred with Vatican II. One must remember that the concrete world of formal organizations is far from ideal. This, of course, is the whole point of Weber’s constructs, to be able to compare the ideal to the concrete for purposes of measurement. Ideally, a hierarchal organization like the Roman Catholic Church would not experience internal controversies over settled dogma. Yet, human individuals are more complex still and subject to

many competing ideological factors. Hence, Catholicism does indeed grapple with individuals and groups within its boundaries that dare to promote women's ordination, among other things. The ways in which individual Catholics deal with the inconsistencies is likely diverse. Some Catholic activists may internally reconcile their Catholicism with their egalitarian stance by attempting to ground their activism in some of the more inclusive principles emerging from Vatican II.¹⁵

Such contrary opinions – to some extent – can be found throughout the world, as demonstrated in interviews conducted in parts of the developing world by Sr. Frances Bernard O'Connor over twenty-five years ago (1993). Much of this is connected – directly or indirectly – with the international “Womenpriests” movement that emerged from the “Women-Church” efforts (Hunt 2009: 95-96), and has been thus imported into other cultural contexts. A more recent study on postgraduate students in Spain, investigating how economic status and specific beliefs might be correlated with support for the Catholic ordination of women, resulted in the counter-intuitive finding that those with conservative attitudes of gender equality were actually more likely to support women being allowed into the Catholic priesthood (Martinez et al. 2012). Likewise, the response of the Belgian Catholic laity to the definitive papal pronouncement of 1994 was quite radical, bringing into sharp focus the tension between centuries-old Catholic dogma and contemporary feminist sensibilities (Jacobs 1996). Yet, it should be noted that most of the activism in favor of women's inclusion in the priesthood has occurred, and continues to occur, in the westernized contexts of Europe and the United States.

As established by Ellingson et al. (2001), for some Catholics, there seems to be some

¹⁵ However, it should be noted that while Vatican II promoted ecumenical relations with other Christians, and even other religions, nowhere is the ban on female priests rescinded.

disconnect between official Church positions and grassroots opinions among Catholics (even within Catholic organizations). Within the theological context of Roman-Catholicism, the teachings of the Church are not meant to be opposed, yet some Catholics do, in fact, oppose Catholic positions. This should not be surprising, as a similar dynamic can be found within most ideologies, from evangelicalism to environmentalism – there is often some disconnect between observed role performance and encoded role expectations, even in a hierarchal context.

Thus, despite the hierarchal structure of authority within the Catholic Church, western religious individualism – especially within the spiritual marketplace of the U.S. – has resulted in a wide variance in attitudes toward gender roles among Catholics (Ecklund 2003; Ecklund 2006). As Ecklund (2006) notes, “While individual parishes are constrained by Church institutions, there are considerable differences in how parishes that are all under the umbrella of the Catholic Church interpret and practice Church teachings that influence the role of women” (82). Ellison, Acevedo, and Ramos-Wada (2011) explain this in its historical context:

... in the post Vatican II era, lay non-Hispanic white Catholics have been increasingly inclined to disregard some elements of church teaching, valorizing individual conscience as the arbiter of spiritual truth and social policy. This has led to significant liberalization on some social attitudes during the past two decades ... (38)

An earlier analysis by Ebaugh (1991) elaborates on this very concept, suggesting that:

The result [of Vatican II] was a dilemma of authority for the hierarchy as the laity internalized this notion [of spiritual individualism] and began to challenge the legitimacy of hierarchic control.... The consequences of this reconceptualization for Roman Catholicism in the United States were: personalized religion, selective Catholicism, an emphasis on religion as ethnic and cultural identity, and the revitalization of traditional values by means of social support groups in the church. (1)

It is worth noting that the first three of Ebaugh’s (1991) stated consequences effectively support the idea of a Protestantization of American Catholicism.

Hunt (2009) explains the enduring appeal of “Women-Church” for Catholic feminists in

different terms, but with the same emphasis on religious self-determination:

Women-church is rooted in the Catholic tradition of love and justice, sacrament and solidarity, but broadly conceived as both a political and ecclesial space in which to strive to build a "discipleship of equals." Likewise, it is a comfortable space in which to worship and celebrate with people who understand their faith in a pluralistic religious context in which no tradition can claim hegemony contra the kyriarchy's embarrassing insistence on being the sole source of salvation. It is also a way to "be church" rather than simply attend church, to be an active shaper in the life and work of one's own community. For many Catholic women, including members of religious congregations, women-church is a touchstone with the tradition we share and a launching pad for our interreligious and postkyriarchal [*sic*] Catholicism. (94)

As the genesis of liberation theology¹⁶ demonstrated, Catholicism is no stranger to being mixed with paradoxical ideologies. Thus, it should come as no surprise that there are those (women and men) merging their Catholic religion with their feminist stances on controversial issues (Ecklund 2003). Some women in conservative religions (including Catholicism) reject feminism outright, while others end up embracing feminist stances and rejecting the religion. Ecklund (2003), however, points to a third group: those women who mix their feminism and Catholicism by either carving out niches for women in the Church or working for change (516). Perhaps surprisingly, women who leave the Church generally continue to maintain the same perspective on what being Catholic means as those women agreeing with Church teachings (Ecklund 2005). For some Hispanic women, the distinction between Catholics supporting women's ordination and those who do not may be rooted in the functional nature of Catholicism in some Latin American cultures. Gebara (2008) explains:

This marginalized position with respect to the Catholic Church allows feminist theologians a certain distance from ecclesiastical control, but at the same time means that as a movement feminist theology lacks influence because of its distance from the centre [*sic*] of power. Meanwhile, socio-economic factors continue to oppress the poorest, many of whom--especially women--find solace in the institutional Church and the religious models that feminist theology wishes to critique. (324)

¹⁶ *Liberation theology* began in South America and originally represented the mixing of Catholic religion with Marxism.

As far back in history as we can confidently make assessments, the Catholic Church – though providing ministry paths for women to pursue – has denied women entrance to the priesthood, reserving the office of priest for men only (Ecklund 2003; Ecklund 2006). While there were some semantical debates before the Middle Ages that resulted in shifting boundaries regarding what exactly constituted official leadership positions within the Church, women were nearly always relegated to niches outside of those boundaries (Macy 2002). While Vatican II was a revolutionary council for contemporary Catholicism in many ways and may have even motivated debates within the Church concerning women’s ordination, the official reconsiderations of the council did not change the strict male-only boundaries of the priesthood. Some have cited sexist stereotypes as the reason that women are not allowed to be priests (Jelen 1989: 579). While this is no doubt sometimes true, it must be remembered that the Catholic Church is a hierarchal institution that has maintained its position for centuries; it is equally possible that the position is simply rooted in a tradition that has yet to change. By the 1990s, researchers and activists within the Catholic Church were publishing a plethora of books arguing for women’s ordination, a trend that has continued unabated to the present (e.g., Behr-Sigel 1990; Byrne 1995; Daigler 2012; Field-Bibb 1991; Halter 2004; Macy 2007; Raab 2000; Sedgwick 1992; St. Pierre 1994; Sweeley 2018; Taddei-Ferretti 2017; Wijngaards 2001). Indeed, as early as 1997, one sociological researcher described the Catholic Church as “deeply divided” over this very issue (Manning 1997: 375). According to targeted research conducted in 2015, 88% of Catholics in the U.S. supported the idea of the Church allowing women to be ordained to the priesthood (Shriver Report).

Further, as with most religious organizations, women are more numerous than men in membership in the Catholic Church (Gallup and Lindsay 1999). Some women have managed to

carve out roles for themselves as administrators of local Catholic churches without a priest (Wallace 1991). Some activists, undaunted by the fiat nature of Church declarations, have organized to lobby for change within the Catholic Church concerning gender issues, including that of women's ordination to the priesthood. Perhaps the most high-profile movement among such efforts is the previously mentioned WomenPriest movement, a coalition that cannot officially exist in communion with the Church but campaigns for change within its orbit (Henold 2008). In 2018, pro-women's ordination Catholics gathered in Union Square in New York City for a "Feminism and Faith in Union" prayer march – the very name of which highlights the tension previously identified: i.e., these are Catholics with no intention of leaving the Catholic Church who nevertheless hold tightly to their feminist convictions (Manson 2018). While the evident tension between Catholic dogma and feminist convictions does not evaporate, there are also Catholic feminist theologians who attempt to reconcile the tension by digging deep into traditional theological wells of orthodoxy such as the widely regarded work of St. Thomas Aquinas (e.g., Cahill 2015).

Yet, women continue to be denied access to the priesthood. There has been some evidence that "Catholic men ... if they oppose female ordination, seem likely to do so because of a belief that women are better qualified to handle specialized, non-clerical tasks," with accompanying speculation that "this distinction may arise because of the status of Mary in the Catholic church" (Jelen 1989: 579). Exploring the factors correlated with viewpoints on whether or not the Catholic Church should allow women into the priesthood may assist in pursuing explanations concerning why and how such perspectives are held and seem to be increasing.

The Hispanic Catholic Population in the United States

As noted by Matovina (2013), it is an often neglected fact that the original Roman

Catholics in the United States were Hispanic (23). In the contemporary United States, the Hispanic population represents a large number of Roman Catholics. In 2011, on the basis of the fifth national demographic survey conducted by the Vatican, it was reported that “Catholics’ share of the American population has remained stable (at 24%), largely as a result of Hispanic immigrants” (D’Antonio 2011: 1a). According to the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), about 40% of the U.S. Catholic population identified as Hispanic/Latino as of 2013 (CARA Catholic Polls 2000-2013). The 2014 Pew Research Center Religious Landscape Study showed that the percentage of Hispanics in the U.S. identifying as Catholic had actually increased substantially in the period from 2007 to 2014 (2014^b). It has been projected that Hispanic Catholics will likely increase to 18% of the entire U.S. population before 2043 (Skirbekk, Kaufman, and Goujon 2010). The Catholic Church itself has recently acknowledged the importance of the Hispanic Catholic community in the U.S. as constituting the future of Catholicism in America, seeking to tap into the under-30 Latino community by spearheading an initiative involving intensive four-week leadership training retreats (called *Encuentros*, or “encounters”) throughout the U.S. (Long-Garcia 2018).

Of course, not all Hispanic Christians are Catholic. Evangelical (and especially Pentecostal/Charismatic) forms of Protestantism began to infiltrate Latin American cultures in the 1970s-1980s, increasingly gaining converts from Catholicism to a noticeable degree (Martí 2015). However, there remains an evident contrast in the religion/culture relationship when Hispanic Catholics are compared to their evangelical Protestant counterparts:

With a relatively short history as a burgeoning minority religious affiliation in Latin America, Protestantism has not been closely tied to nation building or to the nation-state. Many of the adherents of Latin American evangelical and Pentecostal congregations are converts or children of converts. In addition, and partly as a consequence of this lack of historical rootedness, *Latin American Protestantism lacks the robust inculturated quality of both official and folk Catholicism*. It is a sacred-text-centered religiosity that eschews

many other symbolic representations of the sacred and often views local devotionism and the use of sacramentals as contaminating superstition. Membership in Latin American Protestant Christianity, then, generally *entails a rigorous breaking with previous religious and secular practices robustly salient in local cultures*, such as Marian devotion and even popular music genres and dances. Latin American Protestantism, as may be Protestantism in general with its roots in the Reformation, is about breaking with tradition or perhaps more vigorously sorting the sacred from the profane. (Calvillo and Bailey 2015: 62-63, emphases added)

Utilizing the Pew Hispanic Center 2007 Hispanic Religion Survey, Ellison, Acevedo, and Ramos-Wada (2011) investigated Hispanic attitudes toward gay marriage. In that article, there is a statement that is relevant to this study as well: “Although numerous studies have linked religious affiliation, practice, and belief with policy-related attitudes and practices in the general population, the literature on these issues among Hispanics is remarkably thin” (49). Indeed, given the large number of Hispanic Catholics, the amount of literature dealing directly with Hispanics and women in the priesthood is scant at best. For instance, the General Social Survey (GSS), a popular source among researchers for statistical data, asked direct questions of respondents (both Catholic and Protestant) concerning their views of women’s ordination, but only did so in 1983-1984 and – for whatever reason – has not revisited the topic since, as demonstrated in a recent summary of GSS data (2019). Yet, based on demographic surveys conducted at the request of the Vatican itself, D’Antonio et al. (2013) highlight both the perspectives of Hispanic Catholics and women’s ordination (and related gender issues) as two of the most significant factors in shaping the future of the Catholic Church in America,

It has been observed that Hispanic women in the United States have definite feminist concerns, some of these being unique to Hispanic women (Pompper 2007). However, following the criticisms of Cornwall (2009), researchers should be cautious about making essentialist-type interpretations based on gender as both women and men are capable of varying positions based

on social construction. It seems more likely that the religious structure itself and Hispanic ethnicities will be more salient.

As early as 1990, there were some signs that Hispanic attitudes were beginning to change due to social adaptability (Vega 1990). However, oft-cited factors like *machismo* and *familism* have continued to be prominent concepts among Hispanic-American families (Ellison, Wolfinger, and Ramos-Wada 2013).¹⁷ Such traditional gender role perspectives seem to lessen by degree with each new generation subsequent to initial immigration (Edgell and Docka 2007; Hunt 2001; Vega 1990). There is some qualitative research (albeit, limited) that suggests that at least some young Latina Catholics may have their minds opened to feminist ideas that are actually introduced by their teachers in Catholic private schools (Garcia 2017).

Simultaneously, it has been observed that Hispanic Catholics in the U.S., along with their African American counterparts, seem less likely to embrace progressive views on abortion and same-sex marriage to the degree that white American Catholics have (Dillon 2014). However, when researchers compare Hispanic American Catholics to Hispanic American Protestants, there is evidence that the former hold more progressive views on such issues than the latter (Bartkowski et al. 2012; Severson Muñoz-Laboy, and Kaufman 2014). In any case, the views of Hispanic Catholics on such controversial issues are by no means monolithic and do seem to vary with differing conceptions of what it means to be Catholic intersecting with what it means to be American (Ellison, Acevedo, and Ramos-Wada 2011; Ellison, Echevarria, and Smith 2005).

Such variance may be related to the level of religiosity – measured specifically in terms of Catholic devotion – characterizing different respondents (Ellison, Acevedo, and Ramos-Wada

¹⁷ While such factors are here acknowledged as salient factors, it was also recognized in the study conducted that such factors can be overplayed in their reification.

2011: 47, 51). However, the situation with Hispanic Catholics is more complex than might be supposed. Progressive Protestants tend to attend progressive churches and be generally consistent in their embrace of progressive viewpoints. Catholic teachings and positions clearly influence Hispanic Catholics on everything from organ donation¹⁸ to sexuality (e.g., Marván et al. 2017; Smith 2015). Hispanics have also been found to exhibit higher degrees of religiosity and higher rates of preference for religious over secular counselors, as well as being more doctrinally conservative than their white peers (Crosby and Bossley 2012; D’Antonio, Dillon, and Gautier 2013). More generally, the decline rate in religiosity evident among children raised in Protestant households is significantly lower for those raised in Hispanic Catholic households (Vaidyanathan 2011). Among Millennials, younger Hispanic American Catholics also tend to define a “good Catholic” as someone who follows Catholic teachings on issues such as divorce and abortion (Rosenberg 2015; Survey Highlights 2011: 23a).

Wuthnow (1990) promoted the idea of religious restructuring, which included the assumption of a parallel dynamic between religious conservatism and political conservatism. Yet, the influence of Catholicism is not always evident in the areas where one might think it would be – i.e., in matters defined in dogmatic terms. O’Brien and Abdelhadi (2020) found that Wuthnow’s concept does not always hold true among non-white populations. More specifically, Hispanic Catholics do not necessarily hold political views in accord with their conservative religious views. This may be one reason Hispanic American Catholics do not typically disavow Catholicism or leave the Catholic Church over adopting more progressive viewpoints on some issues. Latina Catholics with dogma-denying progressive views on issues like women’s

¹⁸ The influence of Catholicism on organ donation in Mexico is interesting in that Marván et al. (2017) found that some of their Catholic respondents were not organ donors based on the mistaken perception that such was forbidden by Roman Catholicism (which actually encourages organ donation).

ordination are perhaps the epitome of Winter's (1994) concept of "defecting in place" – i.e., remaining loyal to the religious structure or tradition despite strong feelings of deprivation.

In many ways, Hispanic American Catholics have differed from their white counterparts much like African American Protestants have often differed in significant ways from their white evangelical counterparts (Wuthnow 2007: 183-187). Some research suggests that Hispanic Catholics are more resistant to assimilation than their Protestant counterparts (Katz 1985; Sodowsky, Lai, and Plake 1991; Sodowsky and Plake 1992; Steffen and Merrill 2011). For example, in an investigation of acculturation on Mexican immigrants in Utah, Steffen and Merrill (2011) found that those in the LDS Church exhibited higher levels of acculturation to Anglo culture than those with Catholic affiliation.¹⁹ Similarly, Calvillo and Bailey (2015) found that Hispanic American Catholics are more proficient in Spanish, and more likely to name national origin or ethnicity as salient identities, when compared to Hispanic American Protestants (68-69). The researchers speculate that "we believe it plausible to suggest that perhaps the Catholic home with its religious objects may more clearly renew memories of common origins and hence provide some contextualizing support for ethnic identity and perhaps continued Spanish use" (Calvillo and Bailey 2015: 69).

Given such observations, when Hispanic American Catholics are observed beginning to fragment and increasingly adopt more progressive views of women in the priesthood, the question arises where such a transition originates and how it is sustained in the face of dogmatic tradition that is – theoretically, at least – required of Catholics. The fact that many such remain Catholic despite their cognitive departures from Catholic dogma is intriguing.

¹⁹ While it is true that the LDS (Mormon) Church is not strictly mainstream Protestant, it is a religious group of domestic origin that is thoroughly Americanized and Anglo-dominant. Therefore, its contrast with Catholicism is similar to the contrast between Protestantism and Catholicism.

In examining a predominantly Hispanic Catholic Church, Edgell and Docka (2007) found that while “traditional gender scripts were both reinforced and challenged” in the congregation, overall “parishioners echoed [the] message of gender difference” (46). Yet, Hispanic Catholics – and Latina Catholics in particular – have not remained silent on gender issues, including that of women’s ordination. One significant movement has been that of Las Hermanas, organized in Texas in the 1970s by Hispanic Catholic women to work for gender equality within the Roman Catholic Church (Medina 2004).

Roman Catholicism remains a deeply embedded part of culture and belief for many Hispanic Catholics, often being intertwined with ethnic identity in a way that Protestant systems of belief typically are not. Indeed, “Hispanic Catholics draw from deep U.S. Latino and Latin American foundations” (Ospino 2017). The relationship between Hispanic Catholicism and Hispanic ethnicities seems to function in a kind of symbiosis that is very different from that experienced by Hispanic Protestants:

Catholicism displays a higher level of inculturation in the sending country and greater overt institutional acceptance of ethnic culture in host countries. Protestantism in Latin America breaks with localized religiosity and traditions, and U.S. Protestant congregations may de-emphasize ethnic culture in their theologies and worship. Hence, Latino Catholicism acts as a bridge to homelands and reinforces ethnic salience ... (Calvillo and Bailey 2015: 57)

Nevertheless, this symbiotic relationship between Catholicism and Hispanic ethnicity is not always consistent in every detail, though progressive ideology for many Hispanic Catholics does not seem entirely consistent either. For instance, as previously noted, although to some degree embracing progressive views of women like their white counterparts, Hispanic American Catholics exit the Catholic Church at a much lower rate (Millennial Values 2012). Research has shown that patriarchal views restricting official ecclesiastical leadership roles to men in Protestant circles are highly correlated with denominational affiliation (for men) and

conservative theological views (for women) (Bartkowski and Hempel 2009). Does the same hold true for Hispanic American Catholics? Or, is a different dynamic at work, one that allows some Hispanic American Catholics to hold on to traditional Catholicism while simultaneously holding contradictory views on certain issues like women's ordination?

Nearly thirty years ago, Hammond and Warner (1993) suggested that the relationship between religion and ethnicity had started to slip due to factors like assimilation and secularization. However, are such implied either/or categorizations sufficient constructs to explain the present topic? What do we do with Hispanic Catholics who maintain loyalty to the Catholic Church, while simultaneously disregarding its dogmatic authority (defined in divine terms) with reference to an issue like women's ordination?

Although concerned with Catholic priests' views of women's ordination in the UK, a conference paper presented by Harvey (2016) is suggestive in its use of a concept that may well apply to Hispanic American Catholics: religious identity is seen as a kind of performance that, for some, may co-exist with other identity constructs such that technical inconsistencies emerge (e.g., holding fast to Catholicism and supporting women's ordination, despite Catholic dogmatism to the contrary). Another distinct possibility, drawing from organizational analysis comparing Anglo and Latino Catholic parishes conducted by Palmer-Boyes (2010), is that the orientation towards traditional Catholic dogma differs between Hispanic American Catholics in Latino congregations and Hispanic American Catholics in Anglo congregations. This research supports the idea that cultural individualism may be a salient factor in Hispanic American Catholic views of women's ordination.

Ethnicity, Religion, and Gender Attitudes

Different variables come into play in shifting gender attitudes. Recent research on

Turkish Muslim migrants suggests that acculturation plays a role in the production of more egalitarian gender attitudes, either through one's separation from the ethnic/religious environment of origin (men and women) and/or direct secularization at the individual level (men) (van Klingerren and Spierings 2020). Adamczyk (2013) found both religiosity and cultural orientations to be important variables in attitudes on gender equality. However, both were found to be strongly mediated by how self-expressive the society in question was, a reality that can enhance conviction in either direction. That is, societies that emphasize self-expression often feature a variety of viewpoints according to the constructed belief system of the individual. It should be noted that Adamczyk's use of "self-expressive" parallels the use of "individualism" in the study conducted.

Ahroid and Meston (2010), in looking specifically at college students compared along racial/ethnic lines, found levels of religiosity (measured using an intrinsic/extrinsic dichotomy) to be significant for Hispanics in determining gender attitudes, though not as much as it was for Euro-Americans. Highlighting just how complex the interplay of variables can be, the researchers also noted that their study found that acculturation was not as salient, with religious differences between ethnic groups existing apart from such processes. Age has also been found to be significant. Bettencourt, Vacha-Hasse, and Byrne (2011) found that attitudes toward feminism were tied to both religiosity and political orientation for older adults, but that religiosity did not play a role in the same attitudes among younger adults. An earlier study in Spain found that Catholic religiosity was a predictor of sexist attitudes (though "benevolent" rather than "hostile"), with higher levels of education diminishing such attitudes (Glick, Lameiris, and Castro: 2002).

Why this Study?

There are several factors that make the study conducted both interesting and valuable. To begin with, at the most general level, this study is a limited exploration of the intersection between levels of religious fidelity and individual convictions concerning women in the priesthood. How are these two dimensions navigated? Who is it who holds sociopolitical convictions in tandem with levels of religiosity? Who is it that simply displays a cognitive dissonance between the two dimensions? What kinds of tension exist between the two dimensions? Further, how significant is the role of culture? In particular, how does the strong influence of American individualism impact the religion of immigrant communities?

Looking at Hispanic Catholics is particularly insightful given the influential place occupied by Catholicism in Hispanic cultures, and what is arguably the unique way in which Catholicism is woven into those cultures (cf. e.g., Chen and Jeung 2012; Díaz and Podetti 2017; Dolan and Deck 1994; Dolan and Hinojosa 1994; Dolan and Vidal 1994; Dries 2015²⁰; Espin 1994; Guevarra et al. 2014; Matovina 2012; O'Brien and Abdelhadi 2020; Rodriguez 2013; Roof and Manning 1994; Rodriguez 2013; Tartakoff 2016).²¹ Indeed, Catholicism has been viewed as being “at the core of the cultural fabric” of Latin American nations, and as “a key to Hispanic culture and a source of unity” (Dries 2015: 254). Catholicism has also been found to be strongly linked with Latino ethnic identity, in contrast to the effects of Protestantism on Latino identity (Calvillo and Bailey 2015). What has been termed “Latina/o theology” even pursues the theological task in tandem with the history of cultures like those of Mexico and Puerto Rico, not

²⁰ Dries (2015) presents a summary of Latin American historical scholarship that addresses the saliency of Catholicism as an essential element of many contemporary Latin American cultures/nations.

²¹ It should be noted that the references cited here cover a variety of Hispanic cultures: Mexico, Guatemala, Venezuela, Peru, El Salvador, the Philippines, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico. While the notion of a unified “Hispanic culture” (singular) is a misguided construct, the literature establishes that Catholicism has become historically embedded across Latin American cultures.

eschewing Catholicism as such but drawing a distinction between Latin American Catholicism and the “Americanization” of Hispanic Catholicism (Dá Vila 2008). It has also been suggested that the strong social ties of Hispanic Catholics may be a key reason for the lack of interreligious relationships among Catholics (the least likely group to have such relationships) (Scheitle and Smith 2011).

Further, while some of the correlations being hypothesized seem like forgone conclusions, generally considered, this is not necessarily the case. The varying ways that Catholicism is manifested within Hispanic cultures means that what is expected is not a given, despite what may be true of the wider American population. For instance, devotion to Mary – often going beyond official Catholic dogma – is strong in Hispanic cultures, even being described as a situation – via revered Marian apparitions – that long ago transitioned from a localized phenomenon to a “global devotion” (Dries 2015: 271). This strong devotion, for some Hispanic Catholics, has been leveraged as ammunition in the struggle for women’s rights (Carneiro 2013: 140; Medina 2004). In marked contrast, other Hispanic Catholics, embracing what has been termed *marianismo*, have remained unwavering in their support for traditional Catholic patriarchy and have done so not by neglecting Mary, but by seeing her as the prime example of submission to authority, a perspective promoted by the Catholic hierarchy (Romanello 2020: 24). Eaton et al. (2016) summarize:

Hispanics’ more conservative beliefs about gender and sexuality are related to the influence of Catholicism in Hispanic culture. Indeed, the cultural ideal for Hispanic women, *marianismo*, comes from the belief in the Virgin Mary (Wamsley, 2014). Marianismo prescribes that women should embrace moral and sexual purity, warmth, and vulnerability. Men, on the other hand, are expected to embody *machismo*, which includes prescriptions to be sexually potent and dominant (Falicov, 2010; Mayo & Resnick, 1996; Torres, Solberg, & Carlstrom, 2002). (790)

The influence of *marianismo*, across Hispanic cultures, has been shown to impact everything

from perinatal depression among Latinas to how women are portrayed in digital advertising in traditional Hispanic cultures (Ertl et al. 2019; Lara-Cinisomo 2019; Mensa and Bittner 2020).

A third factor that makes the proposed research significant is how cultural assimilation (or lack thereof) intersects with original cultural traditions deeply rooted in religious ideology. In contrasting Chinese Buddhist immigrants with Chinese Protestants, Yang and Ebaugh (2001) suggested that an explanatory factor was which religion was prevalent in the host country over against the new home country. Applying the same idea to two very different traditions within Christianity, it is possible that the majority Protestant population – and more so in its elective affinity with American individualism – exerts a greater influence on Hispanic Catholics in the U.S. than it did in Catholic-majority host countries where Protestant conversions are a fairly recent historical development and remain in the minority. The Hispanic American population is a prudent choice in examining this, since this population represents the largest immigrant population in the U.S. In 2018, there were nearly sixty million Hispanic in the U.S., with twenty million being new immigrants, representing 44% of American immigrants, and a community now present long enough to be represented by multiple generations (Batalova, Blizzard, and Bolter 2020).

Valente and Berry (2016) observed:

Sixty percent of U.S. Americans consider religion to be “very important” to them compared to 80% of Latin Americans.... In the U.S. the Protestant-capitalism-individualism link may be dominant (Weber 1930); in Latin America, Catholicism reinforces strong family ties (Cluster and Nicot 2009; Santiago-Rivera et al. 2001).... Thus, religion and religiosity are important factors in shaping cultural norms and values in both Protestant and Catholic societies. (1080)

The question of assimilation raises the issue of how salient Protestant individualism becomes for Hispanic Catholics entering into the context of the U.S. Researchers like Menjivar (2003) have examined how immigrant religious conceptions may mediate assimilation in a host country, but

this question can be turned around: how might pervasive patterns within the host country impact aspects of religious devotion? For instance, Sobrino (2008) suggests that the influx of Hispanic Catholic immigrants will end up producing a “more orthodox” Catholic Church in the U.S. (297).

The significant patriarchal dynamic woven into Latin American cultures is well established, such that “In Latin America strict gender roles and the impact of a patriarchal culture resistant to gender equality are more pronounced ...” (Carneiro 2013: 139). Does the patriarchal nature of traditional Catholicism hold despite the new American influence that immigrants face or, does a new individualistic religiosity emerge alongside continuing Catholic affiliation that, in turn, reshapes traditional viewpoints on gender? According to Ellison, Acevedo and Ramos-Wada (2011), “there is some evidence that observant Latino Catholics, that is, those who attend Mass regularly, tend to oppose abortion and hew closely to other Catholic teachings, especially regarding the family and the sanctity of human life” (37). Yet, Carneiro (2013) describes situations in which the intentional use of psychological therapy can dislodge gender assumptions arising from the Catholic assumptions of immigrants from Latin America. Is it possible that the same sort of transformative process occurs (albeit, more gradual and subtle) with increasing assimilation within the American individualistic context?

The fact that Hispanic assimilation in the U.S. is segmented in manifestation suggests varying degrees of cultural influence mediating Catholic ideals that are embedded in the cultural heritages of Hispanic Catholics (Portes and Zhou 1993; Portes and Rumbaut 2001). As Greeley (1974) persuasively argued long ago, there exist certain situations in which racial/ethnic groups can maintain a separate cultural identity to some degree while simultaneously assimilating to a common core culture with other groups. It is possible that many Hispanic Catholics hold onto a

generally orthodox Catholic affiliation while also having their sociopolitical views on topics like gender influenced by a Protestantized individualism.

Finally, while the study conducted was premised on the interconnectedness of Catholicism with Hispanic cultures, the reverse pattern should not be neglected. This study is also important given the Hispanic American influence on the future evolution of American Catholicism. Ospino (2017) identified ten ways in which Hispanics are “redefining American Catholicism in the 21st century,” including among them the fact that Hispanics are currently the principal reason for the growth of the Catholic Church in the United States, and the fact that “Hispanics are forming a new geographic center for U.S. Catholicism.”

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

For purposes of the study conducted, the Roman Catholic Church itself defined its own criteria for traditional Catholic belief and practice, while respondents in the dataset defined their own beliefs and practices, either in tandem with Catholic requirements or in evident tension with such requirements. This study is fundamentally an investigation into the defining power of individualism within the westernized context of the American spiritual marketplace over against a religious tradition rooted in hierarchal authority legitimized theologically in distinctly dogmatic terms. Given that Roman Catholicism has been so thoroughly woven into Latin American cultures, along with the various transitions inherent in immigration, Hispanic American Catholics represent an ideal community to investigate such questions.

Despite the hierarchal structure of the Roman Catholic Church, exemplified in the *magisterium* and the dogma of papal infallibility, it is expected that Hispanic Catholics in the U.S. showing support for the inclusion of women in the Catholic priesthood will exhibit individualistic tendencies, based on overlapping concepts extant in sociological theory on religion.

Several factors noted above suggest that Hispanic Catholics, much like Italian Catholics in the early United States, have a special relationship with Catholicism as a socio-cultural component woven into the cultures, such that it is at times difficult to distinguish between the two. It becomes especially insightful when the possibility that individualism, perhaps over time, may function to dislodge some aspects of intrinsic Hispanic Catholicism.

Such individualism is a significant point of discussion given two recognized factors: 1) the organizational structure of the Catholic Church demands loyalty as an integral part of what it

means to be Roman Catholic, as established by papal declaration (Protestantism actually lends itself to individualism, but Catholicism – in theory – does not), and 2) the tightly-woven nature of Catholicism with Hispanic ethnicity and culture, which would seem – on the surface – to militate against such individualistic Catholic expression.

This individualism among Hispanic Catholics is explored as categorized in two distinct ways, as exhibited in the following research questions and hypotheses.²²

I) Religious Individualism (two dimensions):

RQ1: How is adherence to Catholic dogma on other controversial issues correlated with support for the inclusion of women in the Catholic Priesthood?

H¹: Hispanic Catholics with views on other controversial issues that are in line with Catholic dogma will be less likely to show support for the inclusion of women in the Catholic Priesthood.²³

RQ2: How are levels of Catholic religiosity correlated with support for the inclusion of women in the Catholic Priesthood?

H²: Hispanic Catholics exhibiting lower levels of Catholic religiosity will be more likely to show support for the inclusion of women in the Catholic Priesthood.²⁴

II) Cultural Individualism (one dimension):

RQ3: Are those Hispanic Catholics less assimilated to U.S. culture more or less likely to support the inclusion of women in the Catholic Priesthood?

H³: Hispanic Catholics who are less acculturated²⁵ will be negatively correlated with support for the inclusion of women in the Catholic Priesthood.²⁶

²² DV = Q262b – Should the Catholic Church allow women to become priests?

²³ Survey Measurements: q17 (views on gay marriage) and q 18 (views on abortion).

²⁴ Survey Measurements: q248 (frequency of confession); q250 (prayer to Mary); q328 (loyalty to Catholic Church); q262a (allow priests to marry?); and q301e (belief in magic/witchcraft) (*syncretism* shows willingness to mix and match outside of Catholic authority).

²⁵ Note that the question concerns assimilation only at the *cultural* level (acculturation), which the composite measure of language usage (see below) is designed to measure. Assimilation is segmented and dynamic, occurring on many levels. No attempt was being made in the study conducted to measure assimilation as a comprehensive dynamic.

²⁶ Survey Measurements: q385-388 (language usage, recoded as a composite scale).

It is argued here that individualism is to be simply identified as: 1) religious self-determination over against dogma and despite the authoritative structure of Catholicism, and 2) assimilation to the American context, well-established as prioritizing individualism in virtually all areas of our society. As Farias and Lalljee (2008) have suggested, “in a collectivist setting individuals are more likely to see themselves as part of an encompassing social network and to act in accordance with what one perceives to be the feelings, thoughts, and actions of the others; in individualistic cultures the self is construed as separate, autonomous, and self-contained” (279, emphasis mine). However, as the same researchers point out, aspects of collective orientation can co-exist with aspects of individualism, and perhaps individualism is best seen in terms of degree rather than a strict dichotomy.

For purposes of the study conducted, the various sophisticated social-psychological measurements for individualism (cf. Farias & Lalljee, 2008) were not necessary²⁷, since individualism was simply used as being synonymous with one’s cognitive distance from the hierarchal authority they profess allegiance to. Our construct of religious individualism can be measured by simply comparing actual allegiance to professed allegiance, while cultural individualism simply refers to the level of cultural assimilation (acculturation).

²⁷ Sophisticated indexes have been developed for investigating individualism and collectivism in the more general sense (cf., e.g., Chen & West, 2008), aiming at concepts like community and social distance. These measurements were not relevant to the study conducted, since we are attempting to examine individualism as a cognitive influence at the individual level within the context of fidelity (or lack thereof) to the well-established hierarchal nature of Roman-Catholicism.

CHAPTER 4

DATA AND METHODS

Dataset

In order to investigate Hispanic Catholic attitudes concerning whether or not the Catholic Church should allow women to enter the priesthood, data were utilized from the Pew Research Center 2013 Survey of U.S. Latinos. This dataset consists of a nationally representative sample of Hispanics (defined as people of Latino background or descent), age 18 and over, drawn from all fifty states in the U.S. (Background and Codebook 2013). The methodology included oversampling for both Catholic and non-Catholic Latinos.

The survey questions were designed and pretested in cooperation with Social Science Research Solutions (SSRS). On behalf of the Pew Research Center, SSRS then conducted bilingual telephone interviews in 2013. Bilingual interviewers conducted the interviews in English, Spanish, or both depending on the preference of the participants. When calling a household, interviewers asked to speak with the adult with the most recent birthday. All interviews were conducted using the Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) system, which guaranteed that all interviews followed the interview script while abiding by designated skip patterns (Background and Codebook 2013).

Utilizing the GENESYS system to render estimates of incidences of Latino household, along with the specific ethnicities, in each area code and exchange combination in the United States, strata were defined based on both Latino ethnicity (e.g., Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Dominican, Central American, South American) and population densities based on U.S. Census data (designated as High Latino, Medium Latino, and Low Latino). Telephone number databases were then used to divide each stratum into those with known Latino surnames

(“surname”) and those without (“RDD”). Regardless of which strata a household fell into, respondents contacted were interviewed regardless of specific ethnic heritage (Background and Codebook 2013).

After eliminating wrong or inappropriate numbers, ineligible participants, and refusals, interviewers were able to give full interviews to 5,103 Hispanic respondents (utilizing a mixture of landline and cell phone contacts). Thus, after weighting the results, the interview process produced a sample size of 5,103 with a margin of error of $\pm 2.1\%$ at the 95% confidence level (Background and Codebook 2013). Of the respondents, 2,281 identified as Catholics, and are the main group of interest in the study conducted.

This dataset is ideal for investigating Hispanic Catholics’ attitudes on whether or not the Catholic Church should allow women to enter the priesthood for a few reasons. First, the sample consisted entirely of Hispanics and asked several questions specific to an immigrant population, including Nativity and language usage questions, both of which were utilized in the study conducted. Second, the data were originally gathered in such a way that a large sample of Catholics was included (2,281), with the final dataset sample approximately split between 48% Catholic and 52% Protestant and other religious affiliation (Background and Codebook 2013). Third, the survey included religiosity questions, some of which were useful for the study conducted. Finally, besides asking directly about support/opposition for whether or not the Catholic Church should allow women to be priests, the survey asked similar questions on potentially parallel issues that were utilized in the study conducted (e.g., whether or not respondents supported same-sex marriage and married men being able to become priests).

Methodology

Given that the research population in this study is Hispanic Catholics, all non-Catholic

respondents were filtered out of the dataset, leaving a sample of 2,281 Catholics. Subsequently, listwise deletion was used to filter out all respondents listed as “missing,” “refused,” or “don’t know” from the variables of interest, resulting in a further modified sample of 784.

Several variables were utilized in this study. The dependent variable is the dichotomous question: Do you think the Catholic Church should or should not allow women to become priests? (q262b). Four models were estimated using multivariate regression analyses.

Model 1 attempts to address the first research question: How is adherence to Catholic dogma on other controversial issues correlated with support for the inclusion of women in the Catholic Priesthood? Two questions asking respondents about other controversial issues on which Catholic dogma is unambiguous were chosen as independent variables. The first asked respondents whether they favored or opposed legalized gay marriage (q17). The second question asked respondents whether they believed that abortion should be legal or illegal (q18).

Model 2 attempts to address the second research question: How are levels of Catholic religiosity correlated with support for the inclusion of women in the Catholic Priesthood? Four questions measuring various beliefs/views specific to Catholics and one question measuring syncretism were chosen as independent variables. First, respondents were asked about their frequency of confession to a priest (q48). Second, respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement, “Do you ever pray to the Virgin Mary?” (q250). Third, respondents were asked whether they could ever imagine leaving the Catholic Church or not (q328). Fourth, respondents were asked whether or not they believed that Catholic priests should be able to marry (q262a). Finally, respondents were asked whether or not they believed that magic could influence the lives of people (q301e).

Model 3 attempts to address the third research question: Are those Hispanic Catholics

less assimilated to U.S. culture more or less likely to support the inclusion of women in the Catholic Priesthood? Only one independent variable was utilized for this model. Four questions addressing respondents' usage of conversational/reading Spanish/English (q385-388) were recoded (with the two English usage questions reverse coded to match the two questions concerning Spanish usage) and then merged into a composite scale to measure language usage, with a Cronbach's alpha score of .76. This scale ranges from 1 to 8, with higher scores indicating more Spanish usage and lower scores indicating more English usage (proficiency in both is not measured, since the questions used concern actual usage of the languages).

Additionally, eight control variables were included in each model: sex, nativity, political party, marital status, education level, age, income level, and a composite variable using standard questions for general religiosity (church attendance + frequency of Bible reading + importance of God in your life = RELIG; Cronbach's alpha = .85).²⁸ The final model, model 4, includes all of the above variables for greater clarity. Appendix A summarizes the three models mentioned above.

²⁸ As noted by Severson, Muñoz-Laboy, and Kaufmann (2014), "Clearly religious proscriptions are followed unevenly by different populations and vary by factors such as age, levels of familism and acculturation, race/ethnicity, gender and local cultural norms" (137). Valiente's (2015) research on Catholic attitudes toward women's ordination in Spain suggests that the *age of respondents* may be a significant factor.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS

As summarized in Appendix B, the final sample contained 784 Hispanic American Catholics, 70% of which supported women as priests. The sample was close to evenly split between male and female, with a slightly higher percentage (55%) of female respondents. Forty-five percent of the sample was foreign born, and respondents averaged toward the middle of the language usage scale (taking into account both Spanish and English usage), weighted slightly toward more Spanish usage.

Respondents age 30-49 had the highest percentage (38%), with over 50% split between ages 18-29 (24%) and 50-64 (27%). Nearly half (46%) of the respondents were married, and over a third (34%) of respondents did not complete high school. Although all four income categories were roughly equal, there was a slightly higher percentage of respondents making from \$20,000 to under \$40,000 annually (27%). Most of the respondents (87%) identified themselves as either Democrat or Independent in political affiliation. Based on a standard religiosity scale (ranging from 0 to 9), the sample was fairly religious (averaging in at 5.84). However, perhaps surprisingly, most of the sample reported never confessing to a priest (35%) or seldom doing so (56%).

Four logistic regression models were estimated measuring the effects of the chosen predictor variables on support for the Catholic Church allowing women in the priesthood. There is one model for each of the three hypotheses, and a final model incorporating all of the variables. As presented in the literature, the nature of religion changes when its social context changes. For much of history, and in much of the world, religious identity is collective and, in significant ways, indistinguishable from the prevailing culture. However, the contemporary

westernized context – perhaps epitomized in the United States – features both a priority on individualistic determination and expression, as well as the democratization of religion itself. Thus, there arises a tension for Hispanic Catholics who have entered into the context of the American spiritual marketplace, a tension that pits traditional Catholicism (which I have argued is woven into contemporary Latin American cultures in unique ways) against western individualism. Two distinct manifestations of individualism (religious and cultural), in the dimensions being measured in each of the three models, are here examined regarding their significance in whether or not Hispanic American Catholics support the inclusion of women in the Catholic priesthood. All four models are summarized in Table 1.

In Model 1, both independent variables are significant. Both the gay marriage variable and the abortion variable were significant at the .001 level ($p < .001$). Based on this population, it appears that Hispanic American Catholics who are opposed to legalized gay marriage are significantly less likely to support women in the priesthood, when compared with those Hispanic American Catholics who favor legalized gay marriage. The estimated regression coefficient indicates that the odds of Hispanic American Catholics supporting women as priests decrease by 44% for those respondents who oppose gay marriage (odds ratio = .56), as compared to those who favor gay marriage. Likewise, those Hispanic American Catholics who are opposed to abortion are significantly less likely to support women in the priesthood, when compared with those Hispanic American Catholics who favor abortion. The estimated regression coefficient indicates that the odds of Hispanic American Catholics supporting women as priests decrease by 54% for those respondents who oppose abortion (odds ratio = .46), as compared to those who favor abortion. It also appears that those Hispanic American Catholics who were foreign born are less likely to support women in the priesthood, when compared with those born in the U.S. ($p <$

.001). The estimated regression coefficient indicates that the odds of Hispanic American Catholics supporting women as priests decrease by approximately 43% for those respondents who are foreign born (odds ratio = .57), as compared to those born in the U.S.

Respondents identifying as Democrats or Independents were more likely to support women in the priesthood ($p < .01$), when compared to respondents identifying as Republicans. The estimated regression coefficients indicate that the odds of Hispanic American Catholics supporting women as priests increase by 93% for those respondents who identify as Democrats (odds ratio = .07) and 92% for those respondents who identify as Independents (odds ratio = .08), as compared to those who identify as Republicans.

Two categories of marital status were significant. When compared with those respondents who were married, Hispanic American Catholics who “have a partner” were significantly ($p < .001$) more likely to support women in the priesthood while those respondents who were divorced were significantly ($p < .01$) less likely to support women in the priesthood. The estimated regression coefficients indicate that the odds of Hispanic American Catholics supporting women as priests increase by 175% for those respondents who “have a partner” (odds ratio = .25) and decrease approximately 53% for those respondents who are divorced (odds ratio = .47), as compared to those who are married.

Respondents reporting that they were 50-64 years old were significantly less likely ($p < .001$) to support women in the priesthood, when compared with those respondents reporting that they were 18 to 29 years old. The estimated regression coefficient indicates that the odds of Hispanic American Catholics supporting women as priests decrease by 66% for those respondents age 50-64 (odds ratio = .34), as compared to those respondents age 18-29,

The only income level that was significant ($p < .01$) in this model was annual income of

\$20,000 to under \$40,000, which was negatively correlated with support for women as priests. The estimated regression coefficient indicates that the odds of Hispanic American Catholics supporting women as priests decrease by 41% for those respondents with an annual income of \$20,000 to under \$40,000 (odds ratio = .59), as compared to those reporting an annual income of less than \$10,000 to under \$20,000.

Finally, the standard religiosity control was significant ($p < .01$), with higher religiosity (measured in general terms) being negatively correlated with support for women as priests. The estimated regression coefficient indicates that the odds of Hispanic American Catholics supporting women as priests decrease by 12% for those respondents with higher religiosity (odds ratio = .89).

For Model 2, three of the independent variables measuring Catholic religiosity (i.e., fidelity to Catholicism) were significant. First, Hispanic American Catholics reporting that they could imagine leaving the Catholic Church someday were significantly ($p < .001$) more likely to support women as priests than those respondents who could never leave the Catholic Church no matter what. The estimated regression coefficient indicates that the odds of Hispanic American Catholics supporting women as priests increase by 116% for those respondents who could imagine leaving the Catholic Church (odds ratio = 2.16), as compared to those reporting that they could never leave the Catholic Church.

Second, those respondents who believed that the Catholic Church should not allow priests to marry were significantly ($p < .001$) less likely to support women as priests, when compared with respondents who believed that the Catholic Church should allow priests to marry. The estimated regression coefficient indicates that the odds of Hispanic American Catholics supporting women as priests decrease by 83% for those respondents who oppose marriage for

priests (odds ratio = .17), as compared to those supporting marriage for priests.

Finally, those respondents with syncretistic beliefs regarding magic and witchcraft were significantly less likely ($p < .001$) to support women as priests than those respondents not holding such beliefs. The estimated regression coefficient indicates that the odds of Hispanic American Catholics supporting women as priests decrease by approximately 56% for those respondents who believe in magic and witchcraft (odds ratio = .44), as compared to those who do not believe in magic and witchcraft. Neither respondents' frequency of confession to a priest nor whether or not they pray to Mary were significant.

Looking at the control variables included in Model 2, there were both similarities and differences from Model 1. Nativity was again significant ($p < .001$), with foreign born respondents being less likely to support women as priests, when compared to those born in the U.S. For Model 2, the estimated regression coefficient indicates that the odds of Hispanic American Catholics supporting women as priests decrease by 50% for those respondents who are foreign born (odds ratio = .50), as compared to those born in the U.S.

Political party identification remained significant, with respondents identifying as Democrat or Independent both being significantly ($p < .001$) more likely to support women as priests when compared with those respondents identifying as Republican. For this model, the estimated regression coefficients indicate that the odds of Hispanic American Catholics supporting women as priests increase by 167% for those respondents who identify as Democrats (odds ratio = .33) and 135% for those respondents who identify as Independents (odds ratio = 2.35), as compared to those who identify as Republicans.

As in Model 1, those respondents who "have a partner" were significantly ($p < .001$) more likely to support women in the priesthood while those respondents who were divorced were

significantly ($p < .05$) less likely to support women in the priesthood as compared with those respondents who were married. For Model 2, the estimated regression coefficients indicate that the odds of Hispanic American Catholics supporting women as priests increase by 181% for those respondents who “have a partner” (odds ratio = 2.81) and decrease approximately 53% for those respondents who are divorced (odds ratio = .47), as compared to those who are married.

As in Model 1, those respondents reporting that they were 50-64 years old were significantly less likely ($p < .0001$) to support women in the priesthood, when compared with those respondents reporting that they were 18 to 29 years old. The estimated regression coefficient indicates that the odds of Hispanic American Catholics supporting women as priests decrease by 78% for those respondents age 50-64 (odds ratio = .22), as compared to those who age 18-29. In contrast to Model 1, those respondents reporting ages of 65 or older were also significantly ($p < .0001$) less likely to support women in the priesthood, when compared with those respondents reporting that they were 18 to 29 years old. The estimated regression coefficient indicates that the odds of Hispanic American Catholics supporting women as priests decrease by 79% for those respondents age 65 or older (odds ratio = .21), as compared to those who age 18-29.

As in Model 1, those respondents reporting an annual income of \$20,000 to under \$40,000 were significantly ($p < .01$) less likely to support women as priests. The estimated regression coefficient indicates that the odds of Hispanic American Catholics supporting women as priests decrease by 46% for those respondents with an annual income of \$20,000 to under \$40,000 (odds ratio = .54), as compared to those reporting an annual income of less than \$10,000 to under \$20,000.

For Model 2, the general religiosity composite remained significant ($p < .05$), though not

as significant as in the previous model. The estimated regression coefficient indicates that the odds of Hispanic American Catholics supporting women as priests decrease by 9% for those respondents with higher religiosity (odds ratio = .91).

In Model 3, the composite acculturation measure (language usage) was not statistically significant. For the most part, the control variables that were significant in Model 2 remained significant in Model 3, with only a few adjustments. The nativity variable remained significant ($p < .001$). The estimated regression coefficient indicates that the odds of Hispanic American Catholics supporting women as priests decrease by 42% for those respondents who are foreign born (odds ratio = .58), as compared to those born in the U.S.

Those respondents identifying their political party as Democrat or Independent also remained significantly positively correlated with support for women as priests ($p < .001$). The estimated regression coefficients indicate that the odds of Hispanic American Catholics supporting women as priests increase by 155% for those respondents who identify as Democrats (odds ratio = 2.55) and 155% for those respondents who identify as Independents (odds ratio = 2.55), as compared to those who identify as Republicans.

Consistent with the first two models, those respondents who “have a partner” were significantly ($p < .001$) more likely to support women in the priesthood while those respondents who were divorced were significantly ($p < .05$) less likely to support women in the priesthood, as compared with those respondents who were married. For Model 3, the estimated regression coefficients indicate that the odds of Hispanic American Catholics supporting women as priests increase by 157% for those respondents who “have a partner” (odds ratio = 2.57) and decrease 49% for those respondents who are divorced (odds ratio = .51), as compared to those who are married.

Once again, none of the education levels were significant in Model 3. For this model, those respondents reporting ages of 30-49 were significant ($p < .05$), being less likely to support women in the priesthood, when compared with those respondents reporting that they were 18 to 29 years old. The estimated regression coefficient indicates that the odds of Hispanic American Catholics supporting women as priests decrease by 39% for those respondents age 30-49 (odds ratio = .61), as compared to those who age 18-29. Those respondents reporting ages of 50 to 64 were again significantly ($p < .001$) less likely to support women in the priesthood, when compared with those respondents reporting that they were 18 to 29 years old. The estimated regression coefficient indicates that the odds of Hispanic American Catholics supporting women as priests decrease by 69% for those respondents age 50-64 (odds ratio = .31), as compared to those who age 18-29. Likewise, those aged 65 or older also remained significant ($p < .05$), though less significantly than in Model 2. The estimated regression coefficient indicates that the odds of Hispanic American Catholics supporting women as priests decrease by 64% for those respondents age 65 or older (odds ratio = .36), as compared to those who age 18-29.

Once again, annual income of \$20,000 to under \$40,000 was significant ($p < .01$), being negatively correlated with support for women as priests. The estimated regression coefficient indicates that the odds of Hispanic American Catholics supporting women as priests decrease by 40% for those respondents with an annual income of \$20,000 to under \$40,000 (odds ratio = .60), as compared to those reporting an annual income of less than \$10,000 to under \$20,000.

Finally, the standard religiosity control was even more significant ($p < .001$) than in either Model 1 or Model 2, with respondents with higher religiosity being less likely to support women as priests. The estimated regression coefficient indicates that the odds of Hispanic American Catholics supporting women as priests decrease by 17% for those respondents with

higher religiosity (odds ratio = .83).

In the final model, Model 4, all of the variables across the three models outlined above are accounted for. The independent variables have not changed much in Model 4.

Independently, most of the patterns previously observed remain. As in the previous models, all of the independent variables, with the exceptions of frequency of confession to a priest and the composite acculturation measure (language usage), remain significant. Both lack of support for abortion and lack of support for gay marriage remain negatively correlated with support for women as priests. The estimated regression coefficient indicates that the odds of Hispanic American Catholics supporting women as priests decrease by 42% for those who oppose gay marriage (odds ratio = .58) and for those who oppose abortion (odds ratio = .58), as compared with those who favor the same.

Catholic loyalty remains significant ($p < .001$), with those Hispanic American Catholics who could imagine leaving the Catholic Church being more likely to support women as priests, as compared to those who could never imagine leaving the Catholic Church. The estimated regression coefficient indicates that the odds of Hispanic American Catholics supporting women as priests increase by 114% for those respondents who could imagine leaving the Catholic Church (odds ratio = 2.14), as compared to those reporting that they could never leave the Catholic Church. Those respondents opposing marriage for priests were also significant ($p < .001$), being less likely to support women as priests than those who favor marriage for priests. The estimated regression coefficient indicates that the odds of Hispanic American Catholics supporting women as priests decrease by 82% for those respondents who oppose marriage for priests (odds ratio = .18), as compared to those supporting marriage for priests. As in Model 2, those respondents with syncretistic beliefs regarding magic and witchcraft were significantly less

likely ($p < .001$) to support women as priests than those respondents not holding such beliefs. The estimated regression coefficient indicates that the odds of Hispanic American Catholics supporting women as priests decrease by approximately 57% for those respondents who believe in magic and witchcraft (odds ratio = .43), as compared to those who do not believe in magic and witchcraft.

Almost all of the control variables significant in Model 3 remain significant. Nativity remained significant ($p < .001$), with those respondents who are foreign born being less likely to support women as priests than those born in the U.S. The estimated regression coefficient indicates that the odds of Hispanic American Catholics supporting women as priests decrease by 50% for those respondents who are foreign born (odds ratio = .50), as compared to those born in the U.S.

Those respondents identifying their political party as Democrat or Independent also remained significantly positively correlated with support for women as priests, though less so than in Model 3 ($p < .05$). The estimated regression coefficients indicate that the odds of Hispanic American Catholics supporting women as priests increase by 112% for those respondents who identify as Democrats (odds ratio = 2.13) and approximately 92% for those respondents who identify as Independents (odds ratio = 1.91), as compared to those who identify as Republicans.

Consistent with the first three models, those respondents who “have a partner” were significantly ($p < .001$) more likely to support women in the priesthood while those respondents who were divorced were significantly ($p < .05$) less likely to support women in the priesthood as compared with those respondents who were married. For the final model, the estimated regression coefficients indicate that the odds of Hispanic American Catholics supporting women

as priests increase by 185% for those respondents who “have a partner” (odds ratio = 2.85) and decrease 54% for those respondents who are divorced (odds ratio = .46), as compared to those who are married.

Those respondents reporting ages of 30-49 were again significant ($p < .05$), being less likely to support women in the priesthood, when compared with those respondents reporting that they were 18 to 29 years old. The estimated regression coefficient indicates that the odds of Hispanic American Catholics supporting women as priests decrease by 40% for those respondents age 30-49 (odds ratio = .60), as compared to those respondents age 18-29. Those respondents reporting ages of 50 to 64 were again significantly ($p < .001$) less likely to support women in the priesthood, when compared with those respondents reporting that they were 18 to 29 years old. The estimated regression coefficient indicates that the odds of Hispanic American Catholics supporting women as priests decrease by 77% for those respondents age 50-64 (odds ratio = .23), as compared to those respondents age 18-29. Those aged 65 or older were more significant than in Model 3 ($p < .001$). The estimated regression coefficient indicates that the odds of Hispanic American Catholics supporting women as priests decrease by 74% for those respondents age 65 or older (odds ratio = .26), as compared to those who respondents 18-29.

Those respondents reporting an annual income of \$20,000 to under \$40,000 were less significant than in Model 3 ($p < .05$), but remained negatively correlated with support for women as priests. The estimated regression coefficient indicates that the odds of Hispanic American Catholics supporting women as priests decrease by 41% for those respondents with an annual income of \$20,000 to under \$40,000 (odds ratio = .59), as compared to those reporting an annual income of less than \$10,000 to under \$20,000.

The one exception in Model 4 is the composite variable measuring standard religiosity.

Although significant to varying degrees in the first three models, this variable is no longer significant once all of the variables are factored in.

Table 1

Four Models Estimating Effects of Variables on Support for Women in the Priesthood (n = 784)

| | | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|
| Controversial Issues | | | | | |
| Gay Marriage (Favor) | Oppose gay marriage | -.57(.18)*** | | | -.54(.20)** |
| Abortion (Favor) | Oppose abortion | -.78(.17)*** | | | -.54(.18)** |
| Catholic Religiosity | | | | | |
| Confession to a priest (Never) | Regularly confess | | .58(.55) | | .34(.57) |
| | Occasionally confess | | -.16(.36) | | -.17(.37) |
| | Seldom confess | | -.36(.21) | | -.38(.21) |
| Prayer to Mary (Yes) | Do not pray to Mary | | -.34(.23) | | -.34(.24) |
| Catholic Loyalty (Never leave) | Could leave | | .77(.15)*** | | .76(.20)*** |
| Should priests marry (Yes) | Priests should not marry | | -1.81(.18)*** | | -1.70(.19)*** |
| Belief in magic (No) | Believes in magic | | -.81(.17)*** | | -.83(.19)*** |
| Acculturation Composite | | | | | |
| Language Usage | | | | -.10(.06) | -.10(.07) |
| Controls | | | | | |
| Sex (Male) | Female | -.15(.16) | -.25(.17) | -.21(.15) | -.25(.17) |
| Nativity (Native born) | Foreign born | -.55(.16)*** | -.70(.17)*** | -.54(.15)*** | -.69(.17)*** |
| Political pref (Republican) | Democrat | .66(.22)** | .98(.24)*** | .94(.21)*** | .75(.24)** |
| | Independent | .65(.24)** | .85(.25)*** | .93(.22)*** | .65(.26)** |

(table continues)

| | | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Marital status (Married) | Has a partner | 1 .01(.27)*** | 1.03(.29)*** | .95(.26)*** | 1.05(.30)*** |
| | Widowed | .46(.46) | .16(.48) | .41(.43) | .17(.49) |
| | Divorced | -.74(.30)** | -.74(.32)* | -.67(.29)* | -.77(.33)* |
| | Separated | .06(.36) | -.28(.38) | -.03(.34) | -.15(.39) |
| | Never Married | -.03(.23) | -.15(.24) | -.06(.22) | -.13(.25) |
| Education (Never finished HS) | High school graduate | .14(.21) | .24(.22) | .16(.20) | .17(.23) |
| | Some college | -.34(.24) | -.31(.26) | -.14(.24) | -.46(.27) |
| | Four year degree | .09(.24) | .19(.25) | .14(.24) | .15(.26) |
| | Post-bachelor's college | .17(.30) | .65(.34) | .31(.30) | .55(.35) |
| Age Range (18-29) | Age 30-49 | -.36(.23) | -.59(.24)* | -.50(.22)* | -.51(.25)* |
| | Age 50-64 | - 1.09(.26)*** | -1.51(.28)*** | -1.17(.25)*** | -1.47(.30)*** |
| | Age 65+ | -.52(.34) | -1.56(.36)*** | -.77(.33)* | -1.35(.38)*** |
| Income (under 20k) | Income 20-under 40k | -.53(.21)** | -.62(.23)** | -.52(.20)** | -.52(.23)* |
| | Income 40-under 75k | .07(.24) | -.03(.25) | .18(.23) | .01(.26) |
| | Income 75k+ | .01(.26) | -.41(.29) | .11(.26) | -.47(.30) |
| Religiosity Scale | Standard religiosity | -.12(.04)** | -.10(.04)* | -.19(.04)*** | -.04(.05) |

Note: Statistical significance: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed tests)

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

To summarize Model 1, findings from the analysis show that, among Hispanic American Catholics, those less likely to agree that the Catholic Church should allow women to be priests, on average, are those who also oppose gay marriage and abortion. These findings support the first hypothesis (H^1), that Hispanic Catholics with views on other controversial issues that are in line with Catholic dogma will be less likely to show support for the inclusion of women in the Catholic Priesthood. Although this is not very surprising, it is interesting to note that while a third of our sample supported legalized gay marriage and 43% supported legalized abortion, 70% supported women as priests (Appendix B). It appears that, although such views among Hispanic American Catholics are correlated, support for women in the priesthood is a more common viewpoint in this population. Indeed, the percentage of respondents supporting women as priests is equal to the percentage among American Catholics in general as reported by Burge (2017; 2018). Though it would require analyses beyond the study conducted, it is possible that gender egalitarianism is finding more appeal among Hispanic American Catholics than either gay marriage or abortion.

Model 2 partially supports the second hypothesis (H^2), that Hispanic Catholics exhibiting lower levels of Catholic religiosity will be more likely to show support for the inclusion of women in the Catholic Priesthood. It was respondents who reported being less loyal to the Catholic Church and who believed that the Catholic Church should allow priests to marry who, not surprisingly, also were more likely than their counterparts to support women as priests. However, whether or not respondents prayed to Mary and their frequency of confession to a priest were not significantly correlated with views on women as priests. This is interesting and

suggests that fidelity to Catholicism is not a simple matter. As noted in the literature, Catholicism for some Hispanic Catholics may be primarily functional in nature (Gebara 2008).

The fact that one's practice of praying to Mary was not significant either way calls into question suggestions that the elevated status of Mary within Catholicism may make a difference in Catholic views of women as priests (Jelen 1989). There is nothing in the present analyses to support the suggestions of Eaton et al. (2016) or Romanello (2020) concerning the saliency of concepts like *marianismo* and *machismo*, though such concepts may find support in a larger sample and/or with more sophisticated analyses. Generally, religiosity defined in strictly Catholic terms does not seem to be as salient as some have suggested (e.g., Ellison, Acevedo, and Ramos-Wada 2011), unless a careful distinction is made between fidelity to Catholic dogma from which there is conceptual distance (e.g., issues like the celibacy of priests) and issues directly impacting the experiential dimension of everyday Catholic devotion.

Looking at Model 4, these factors remain significant, along with respondents' support for abortion and support for gay marriage. This may indicate, for this population, that Catholic orthopraxy (i.e., correct devotional practice) is more important to them cognitively than Catholic orthodoxy (i.e., holding the "correct" positions on matters), with support for women in the priesthood being in the latter category. Both frequency of confession and praying to Mary are issues more relevant at the level of devotional practice. In other words, Hispanic American Catholics may sometimes practice Catholicism faithfully while simultaneously being quite willing to depart from Catholic dogma on issues perceived as not being directly related to Catholic devotion.

Another interesting finding concerns syncretism among Hispanic American Catholics. The assumption embedded in the second hypothesis was that Hispanic American Catholics more

likely to embrace elements of non-Catholic spiritual belief or practice alongside their devotion to Catholicism would also be more likely to support women as priests. The most general question available, concerning a belief in magic and witchcraft, was used to measure syncretism.

Contrary to expectations, this variable was not significantly correlated with views on women as priests. Again, this would be an issue that does not necessarily intersect, at the practical level, with fidelity to Catholicism at the devotional level. Nearly 40% of the sample believed that magic and/or witchcraft can influence people's lives (Appendix B). The lack of significance with syncretism, despite the logic of the hypothesis, may be due to Latin American Catholicism's long history of tolerating syncretism while the Vatican officially condemns it (Luzárraga 2013).

The role of religiosity in influencing the gender attitudes of Hispanic American Catholics appears to be complicated. When cognitive positions on matters not directly connected to everyday devotional lives of respondents are in consideration, Catholic religiosity does seem to play a role. Yet, as noted by both Adamczyk (2013) and Ahroid and Meston (2010), the influence of religiosity on gender attitudes is not entirely consistent in immigrant populations (unless more complexity is allowed for when defining religiosity). The data suggests that many Hispanic American Catholics have actually constructed what Aune & Guest (2019) refer to as "everyday theologies" (138). That is, certain devotional practices and viewpoints directly impacting devotional practices are salient and important to them, while issues easily considered in the aggregate remain open to individualistic interpretation.

Given the hierarchal nature of Catholic authority, positions on such issues should measure fidelity to Catholicism. However, for the rank-and-file individual, this may not actually be the case at all. As Adamczyk (2013) highlights, this kind of disconnect emerges in social environments like the U.S., which prioritize self-expression (a concept that parallels our use of

individualism). As Dillon (2001) highlights, it may simply be the case that Catholicism itself is more complicated at the individual level, in that Catholic laity tend to construct a Catholic identity that allows for varying positions contra Church authority:

... interpretive autonomy allows [American Catholics] to recast the official discourse of the church hierarchy in ways that advance alternative interpretations. Interpretive autonomy is grounded in the Catholic tradition or habitus and is reflexively used by Catholics both to maintain the vibrancy of the church and expand the possibilities for institutional change. (411)

Despite the fact that the Catholic-specific items were mixed in significance, the analyses also included a composite scale of standard religiosity measures as a control variable. The general religiosity measures were significant in the first three models, but not in the final model. This further suggests that the role of religiosity in contributing to the gender attitudes of Hispanic American Catholics is complex, with concepts of performative religious identity and religion as a functional social construct being possible alternate routes of explanation (Cornwall 2008; Harvey 2016).

Ellison, Acevedo and Ramos-Wada (2011) present a simplified picture in which “observant” Hispanic Catholics tend to support traditional Church teachings (37). Based on the present research, it is suggested here that such contentions may be overly simplistic and require further clarification given the complexity of the religious identities of Hispanic American Catholics. While inferential and speculative, the widespread assumption that religiosity should be measured in the same way for both Catholics and Protestants (using the standard types of questions employed in our general religiosity composite) may be flawed in some cases and for some populations. For instance, while the Bible is important for both Catholics and Protestants, the way in which biblical material is disseminated within Catholicism differs. In Catholicism, biblical material is largely embedded within a standardized liturgy. While Catholics may read

their Bibles devotionally, it is typically in tandem with that corporate liturgy. The highly individualized type of Bible study promoted within Protestant denominations is largely absent simply because the Catholic is not expected to be their own Bible interpreter. This would seem to imply that a question concerning frequency of Bible reading may not adequately measure religiosity for a Catholic population, to give but one example. Certainly, this distinction deserves much more research, both generally (in terms of Catholic versus Protestant religiosity) and with regards to specific populations (e.g., Hispanic Catholicism in its unique intersection with ethnicity).

In Model 3, language usage was chosen to measure acculturation and a composite scale was created that included both conversational/reading usage in Spanish and conversational/reading usage in English. This has become a relatively standard measure in immigration studies. After calling Spanish language use “one of Latino ethnicity’s core markers,” Calvillo and Bailey (2015) summarize the research connecting language use (or its lack) with assimilation processes: “Immigrant ethnic identity trajectories regarding language use generally follow a three-generation model of Anglicization according to which English monolingualism is the end game for the children and grandchildren of immigrants (Alba et al. 2002). Importantly, *studies suggest that language loss accompanies profound identity transformations due to its centrality to cultural reproduction and perhaps acts as a bellwether of the relative salience of ethnic boundaries* (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000; Mullins 1987)” (58, emphasis mine).

Further, “The phenomenon of ethnic churches appears to be prima facie evidence of the complementary or symbiotic relationship between religion and ethnicity, especially in its internal dimension” (Alba et al. 2002: 59). Kang (2006) conducted research presenting strong arguments

that language usage was a superior predictor of acculturation with Asian Americans. Similar language scales, albeit a bit more sophisticated than the one used in the study conducted, have been used in a plethora of immigration studies, including recent studies on Hispanic populations (e.g., Diaz and Niño 2019; Niño and Hearne 2020). In a study on Central American women designed to assess the use of a brief language scale to measure acculturation, Wallen, Feldman, and Anliker (2002) concluded: “The reliability and validity data from this group of Central American immigrants support the continued use of this brief measure of acculturation in diverse Latino subpopulations when multidimensional measures are neither practical nor feasible” (95). A Pew Research Center summary (2004) states that “Literature has suggested that, while not perfect, language acquisition—in this case the acquisition of English—is a reasonable proxy to measure acculturation and assimilation,” subsequently conducting a study to ascertain the saliency of using language measures for acculturation among Hispanics. This same study concludes, “Across a range of attitudes and beliefs we saw a pattern related to language hold, and language is one of the key forces behind the process of assimilation of Latinos in the United States.”

Using language usage as a measure of acculturation, however, the third hypothesis must be rejected: Hispanic Catholics who are less acculturated will be negatively correlated with support for the inclusion of women in the Catholic Priesthood. Language usage was not significant in either Model 3 or in the final model. Most in the sample fell toward the middle of the composite scale (4.55 on a scale of 1 to 8; see Appendix B), slightly weighted toward more Spanish usage. The lack of significance here runs counter to van Klinger and Spierings (2020), but lends support to the findings of Ahroid and Meston (2010). The research of the latter, also done with Hispanic participants, suggests that the religious differences influencing

gender attitudes develop apart from acculturation processes.

Nevertheless, it is also worth noting that the nativity variable is statistically significant in all four models of this study, with those respondents who were foreign born being less likely to support women as priests as compared with those respondents born in the U.S. This suggests a connection between assimilation and socialization processes and gender attitudes despite the insignificance of language proficiency. Given that assimilation is segmented and happens on varying levels, it is possible that for some Hispanic American Catholics assimilation to the American religious context (with its emphasis on individualism) is happening at one level, while ethnic acculturation is happening on a different level.

Another distinct possibility involves the fact that the language scale used in the study conducted, though suitable as a measure, is nevertheless only one of several possible measures for acculturation. For this reason, our measure here is not as comprehensive as what is often used in immigration studies on assimilation. Therefore, it is likely that using a number of acculturation measures would yield more precise results on this issue.

Gender itself was not significant in any of the four models. Thus, the cautious approach of Cornwall (2008) in criticizing gender essentialist arguments regarding religious perspectives seems warranted. In our Hispanic American Catholic population, it seems that either males or females are nearly equally capable of supporting or not supporting women as priests. This supports recent criticisms arguing for the complexity of gender as a social construct that is fluid and interacts with other salient constructs that result in dynamic variability (Charles 2008: 52-53).

Overall, these findings should at least give some reason for reconsidering Sobrino's (2008) prediction that the increased Hispanic presence in the American Catholic Church will

produce a “more orthodox” (i.e., more traditional) Catholic Church (297). While many Hispanic Catholics in the U.S. no doubt continue to hold conservative views on the issues in question, there is clear variance. As the descriptive statistics in Appendix B show, respondents are divided on the controversial issues investigated, with 70% of all respondents actually agreeing that the Catholic Church should allow women to become priests. Nevertheless, the variance in Hispanic views remains and I am unable to claim that this study has dispelled the ambiguity bemoaned by many concerning studies on Hispanic Catholics and gender. While being Catholic remains an important part of the identity of many Hispanic Americans, what it means to be Catholic appears to be a more subjective question.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

There are some evident strengths of the study conducted. To begin with, the dataset being used is ideal for the proposed investigation, being nationally representative, including Hispanics of all ethnicities, and containing a large number of Catholic respondents. Further, the types of questions asked in the dataset attempt to get at the information needed to address the research questions outlined above.

Of course, there are also some evident limitations in this study. The most obvious limitation concerns the dataset itself, the data being collected going on eight years ago (phone interviews were conducted in 2013). As any social scientist knows full well, the subjects of our investigation (namely, people and society) differ from the subjects of the natural sciences in that they are subject to continual change. No doubt, any data collected today would demonstrate some differences from the results reported here. How significant or subtle those differences would be remains to be seen, and should drive future research on our topic.

Data limitations mean that I am unable to speculate concerning the relative influence of particular theological convictions, political correctness, or specific feminist ideologies among the respondents. The study conducted focuses on the tension between the ecclesiastical/theological borders of Roman Catholicism and the national/cultural borders of the United States with reference to religiosity and individualism. Drawing on Scarborough and Sin (2020), future research may want to focus on the interaction between Catholicism and spatial variations in gender norms in more localized contexts, despite the claims of some researchers that religious conceptions override the social/cultural factors in particular areas (e.g., Menjivar, 2003). It could be that Hispanic American Catholics in New York City tend to follow a pattern very different

from those in Houston, Texas. The study conducted outlines variance among Hispanic American Catholics in terms of generalized “Catholic” and “American” influences, but a more nuanced approach would likely expose the saliency of the plethora of geographical/cultural influences extant in the varying regional areas of the United States.

The dependent variable in this study is a simple dichotomous question and cannot identify which respondents would be more likely to participate in counter-strategies to reform the Catholic Church on the gender question, or even how deeply the convictions (agree or disagree) are held (though historical analyses demonstrate that such activism does exist, as noted in the literature review).

Even on the research questions addressed, this study has utilized very traditional and simple logistic regression models. More recent data capable of producing a larger final sample, along with analyses that utilize more sophisticated methods of analysis, would be a prudent direction for future research. In particular, utilizing more recent criticisms of the use of logistic regression to compare groups may produce more robust analyses (cf., e.g., Long & Mustillo, 2018). To that end, a dataset that asked respondents of all racial/ethnic groups about women in ministry (whether Catholic or Protestant) would allow for substantial comparisons not possible with the dataset used in the study conducted. Attention should also be given to examining the unique features of Catholic religiosity over against the standard measures most often used in order to dissect the complexity of Catholic religiosity in distinction from Protestant religiosity.

Further, the research thus far has already made obvious the rapidly changing nature of society with reference to several factors. First, religion in the United States is rapidly changing, with strong representation of both conservative and progressive varieties. Despite the hierarchal nature of the Roman Catholic Church, as well as Catholicism’s immutable position on religious

authority, the rapidly changing nature of U.S. religion is affecting the Catholic Church as well, with an evident disconnect widening between official Church dogma and the individualist opinions of Catholics themselves (Hispanic or otherwise).

Second, the prominence of gender equality issues is presently increasing, most recently with the activism for gender equality that has emerged in tandem with the #metoo movement. This revival of public activism around gender issues has filtered into Christian communities, a trend that shows no signs of abating. The Hispanic community in the United States is also continually changing in many ways, becoming both more diverse and more active in socio-political concerns, with assimilation as segmented as ever. It seems likely that such changes may well impact our central topic. All of this amounts to what is true of much sociological research: whatever the present research indicates, it will represent a transient snapshot that will almost certainly look very different a decade later.

Finally, as a clarification, it is necessary to acknowledge the quite often inconsistent nature of individual belief systems outside of an academic cocoon. As has often been observed, the rank-and-file individual is not given to critical contemplation in any comprehensive way, but instead tends to construct a worldview along lines that are quite pragmatic and subjective. This is nowhere more apparent than in religion. This is true both in what is believed as well as the degree to which it is believed. Deeply held convictions are not merely a matter of evidence, but of will, emotion, experience, and convenience (Ross, 1994).

Individuals, and even more so in a culture of individualism, typically construct a worldview that enables them to get through day-to-day life, rarely attempting the kind of systemization of ideas that characterizes academia (cf. Berger, 1969; Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Along these lines, a very interesting study among Christian college students in the UK

recently concluded that the variability in the students' view on gender resulted from a process of social construction that included the student's Christian faith, but in interaction with several other considerations, including experience, reason, and family influence (Aune & Guest, 2019). The interaction of these factors allowed all of the students to argue their own convictions on gender equality in tandem with their faith, constructing what the researchers termed "everyday theologies" (138). These considerations remind us that inconsistencies existing in the cognitive aspects of human culture, while significant, cannot be overemphasized as if such a dynamic were uncommon.

Future research will need to focus on constructing a comprehensive index dealing with the question of whether or not the Catholic Church should allow women to be priests. This should include measures of depth of conviction (perhaps, e.g., a constructed index of respondents being asked to make choices in hypothetical scenarios), queries concerning activist or counter-strategy activities, questions concerning how often the topic comes up at home or church or among fellow Catholics, questions as to why respondents feel the way they do, and questions concerning feminist or sexist leanings in respondents. Likewise, qualitative interviews may also increase understanding on some of the complexities. These types of queries would enable researchers to get at some of the details needed to dispel some of the ambiguity in the literature thus far.

APPENDIX A

SUMMARY FRAMEWORK TABLE

| Organizing Construct | Research Questions | Measurement Rationale | Questions & Variables | Hypotheses |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|---|
| Religious individualism (Model 1) | RQ1: How is adherence to Catholic dogma on other controversial issues correlated with support for the inclusion of women in the Catholic Priesthood? | Those unwilling to depart from Catholic dogma concerning other controversial issues will be less likely to support women in the priesthood. | *IV = Gay Marriage; Abortion DV = Q262b (Should the Catholic Church allow women to become priests?) | H¹: Hispanic Catholics with views on other controversial issues that are in line with Catholic dogma will be less likely to show support for the inclusion of women in the Catholic Priesthood. |
| Religious individualism (Model 2) | RQ2: How are levels of Catholic religiosity correlated with support for the inclusion of women in the Catholic Priesthood? | Lower levels of religiosity (measured by Catholic distinctives) will translate into weaker adherence to Catholic tradition, such that those exhibiting lower religiosity will be more likely to support women in the priesthood. | *IV = Freq of confession; view of Mary; Catholic loyalty; Allow priests to marry?; Belief in magic DV = Q262b (Should the Catholic Church allow women to become priests?) | H²: Hispanic Catholics exhibiting lower levels of Catholic religiosity will be more likely to show support for the inclusion of women in the Catholic Priesthood. |
| Cultural individualism (Model 3) | RQ3: Are those Hispanic Catholics less assimilated to U.S. culture more or less likely to support the inclusion of women in the Catholic Priesthood? | Lower levels of assimilation to the Americanized context will be correlated with less support for women in the priesthood. | *IV = Q385-388 (recoded as composite: LANG)– language proficiency DV = Q262b (Should the Catholic Church allow women to become priests?) | H³: Hispanic Catholics who are less assimilated will be less likely to show support for the inclusion of women in the Catholic Priesthood. |

- *Topic:* The correlates of support/non-support among Hispanic American Catholics for the inclusion of women in the Catholic priesthood.

- *Rationale:* For purposes of the study conducted, the Roman Catholic Church itself defines its own criteria for traditional Catholic belief and practice, while respondents in the dataset define their own beliefs and practices, either in tandem with Catholic requirements or in evident tension with such requirements.

- *Framework:* The study conducted utilized measures of two types of individualism (or, alternatively, two manifestations of individualism) as indicative of support for women in the priesthood: religious individualism and cultural individualism. These two constructs are utilized to organize the research questions and hypotheses, as presented in the table above.

- *Guiding theoretical concept:* As presented in the literature, the nature of religion changes when its social context changes. For much of history, and in much of the world, religious identity is collective and, in significant ways, indistinguishable from the prevailing culture. However, the contemporary westernized context – perhaps epitomized in the United States – features both a priority on individualistic determination and expression, as well as the democratization of religion itself. Thus, there arises a tension for Hispanic Catholics who have entered into the context of the American spiritual marketplace, a tension that pits traditional Catholicism (which I argue is woven into contemporary Latin American cultures in unique ways) against western individualism. I believe that the two distinct manifestations of individualism above, in the dimensions being measured, will be shown to be significant factors in whether or not Hispanic American Catholics support the inclusion of women in the Catholic priesthood.

APPENDIX B
DESCRIPTIVE TABLE

| | | Mean(SD) |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|------------|
| Variables of Interest | Should women be priests (DV) | .70(.46) |
| | Support for gay marriage | .32(.47) |
| | Support for abortion | .43(.49) |
| | Never confess | .35(.48) |
| | Regularly confess | .03(.16) |
| | Occasionally confess | .07(.25) |
| | Seldom confess | .56(.50) |
| | View of Mary | .24(.42) |
| | Catholic Loyalty | .36(.48) |
| | Should priests marry | .29(.45) |
| | Belief in magic | .39(.49) |
| | Language usage | 4.55(1.22) |
| Controls | Female | .55(.50) |
| | Foreign born | .45(.50) |
| | Republican | .13(.34) |
| | Democrat | .55(.50) |
| | Independent | .32(.47) |
| | Married | .46(.50) |
| | Has a partner | .13(.34) |
| | Widowed | .04(.20) |
| | Divorced | .08(.27) |
| | Separated | .05(.21) |
| | Never Married | .23(.42) |
| | Never graduated high school | .34(.47) |
| | High school graduate | .20(.40) |
| | Some college | .14(.34) |
| | Four year degree | .20(.40) |
| | Post-bachelor's college | .13(.33) |
| | Age 18-29 | .24(.43) |
| | Age 30-49 | .38(.49) |
| | Age 50-64 | .27(.44) |

(table continues)

| | | Mean(SD) |
|--|----------------------|------------|
| | Age 65+ | .11(.31) |
| | Income less than 20k | .24(.43) |
| | Income 20-under 40k | .27(.44) |
| | Income 40-under 75k | .25(.43) |
| | Income 75k+ | .24(.43) |
| | Standard religiosity | 5.84(2.24) |

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